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FROM ESCHATOLOGY TO ETHICS:  
APPROACHING PAUL'S COLLECTION FOR JERUSALEM

by

Bart Burdette Bruehler

Approved by Joseph R. Dargatzis

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Divinity  
Asbury Theological Seminary  
May 1998

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### Introduction to the Topic

Traveling through the Mediterranean world on his apostolic mission, Paul faced innumerable challenges and possibilities. This study will delve into one of the deepest and most challenging concerns of Paul's ministry, indeed of Paul himself, the Collection for Jerusalem.

This effort by Paul under the Lordship of Christ reached from the depths of Paul's theology to the heights of his hopes for the church. The scope extended from Paul's earliest and already solid intent to practically aid the needy (Gal. 2:10), through repeated fluctuations in his relationship with the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 8-9), and even to his final plans of a fateful visit to Jerusalem and horizon-seeking eyes that looked to the lost in Spain (Rom. 15). Paul was completely convinced of the eschatological realities breaking into the lives of Christians, and in the Collection we see that perspective intersecting with the needs of the poor and of the church as a whole. Such a project received serious theological and practical attention from Paul, which is a clue that scholarly research ought to pay it the same due.

To be sure, the Collection has been the topic of some in-depth research. However, that research has approached the Collection from a variety of frameworks on Paul's theology, intentions, and chronology. Therefore, this study will attempt to sort through these various approaches in an attempt to grasp more soundly at the theology of the apostle in, behind, and through the collection.

### The Problem

This study will exegetically and theologically analyze the New Testament texts concerning Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in order to evaluate some of the interpretive approaches to the collection employed by previous studies. Building on this, the study will then offer and defend an Ethical Approach to the collection with the final aim of briefly synthesizing the theology of the Collection.

### Subproblems

1. The description and categorization of some of the various interpretive approaches to the collection employed by previous studies.
2. The discernment of the texts which relate directly (and indirectly) to the Collection and the exegetical analysis of these texts with attention to the historical background.
3. The evaluation of the surveyed interpretive approaches in light of the evidence from the exegesis of the texts.
4. The formulation and evaluation of an Ethical Approach to the collection based on the exegetical evidence and the integrated scope of other Pauline material on ethics.
5. A synthesis of theological conclusions from the exegesis as interpreted through the adopted and adapted approaches.

### Definition of Terms

“Interpretive approaches” refers to the methodological and/or ideological framework that an interpreter employs as a lens to viewing and determining the meaning of the various texts under consideration. With regard to the Collection, this most often involves a commitment to particular perspectives on Pauline chronology and theology as well as the major influences on Paul.

The “Ethical” Approach express the framework which will guide the interpretation of the Collection by correlating it with other Pauline material on ethics. This will involve both the theological content related to other ethical material and the particular content of other exhortations given by Paul. A synthetic view of Paul’s theological ethics will be employed as a lens to understand the structure and meaning of the Collection.

### Review of Related Literature

Chapter 2 of this study will consists of a categorization and evaluation of the various interpretive approaches to the Collection. Therefore, this review will present and discuss the pertinent literature briefly as a preparation to the more in-depth analysis and use later. Throughout most of its history as a scholarly topic the Collection has only received attention within Biblical commentaries (primarily on 2

Corinthians) or as the subject of briefer essays or articles; however, there are two notable monographs which break this pattern and are entirely devoted to the Collection.

The review will begin by discussing various important commentaries on the crucial texts concerning the Collection. Next it will survey some of the key articles and chapters which have furthered study on the Collection. Third, the two key monographs on the Collection will be reviewed. Finally, a review of some standard works on Pauline ethics will be reviewed as a background to the Ethical Approach proposed by this study.

### Commentaries

Commentaries dealing with the briefer and less extensive Pauline passages on the Collection need to be mentioned first. One of the better commentaries on 1 Corinthians which addressed the materials at the end of this letter on the Collection in a substantial way is Gordon Fee's First Epistle to the Corinthians in the first NICNT series.<sup>1</sup> Fee viewed ch. 16 of 1 Corinthians as a postscript dealing with various instructions on some logistic issues (the Collection and various travel plans). He claimed that the passage in 1 Cor. 16:1-4 (as most other commentators which are less thorough than him) addressed an early stage in the Collection where Paul gave practical advice concerning the gathering and delivery of the money.

Further, two excellent recent commentaries on Romans are helpful guides to the material on the Collection in Romans 15. The first is James Dunn's work in the Word Biblical Commentary series.<sup>2</sup> He affirmed that Paul's comments on the Collection in Romans contain great sincerity and sensitivity, since Paul realized the magnitude and the risk involved in this project. Dunn saw Paul presenting the Collection as a reciprocal act of priestly service binding together the Jewish and

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> James D. G. Dunn, Romans: 9-16, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38b (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988).

Gentile branches of the church. Douglas Moo offered some additional insights.<sup>3</sup> He described the Collection as an act of unity between Jews and Gentiles which Paul recounted primarily as part of his travel itinerary before coming to Rome. Both of these commentators provided helpful discussions which illumined the history of the debate over the purpose of Romans and helped to provide the proper context for this mention of the Collection.

The major text on the Collection is 2 Corinthians 8-9. Thus, most commentaries on 2 Corinthians deal extensively with the topic of the Collection and many are worthy of review here. The first that deserves a grateful mention is C. K. Barrett's helpful commentary on 2 Corinthians, which is an extension of his earlier commentary on 1 Corinthians.<sup>4</sup> Most of Barrett's commentary focused upon Paul's pastoral concern and admonitions to the Corinthian church concerning the Collection. He did view the Collection as a gift to the needy in Jerusalem, but more importantly the Collection was an act of Christian charity which the Corinthian church ought to add to their list of graces (2 Cor 8:7). In light of this, Barrett aimed at explicating Paul's motives, meaning, and method of exhorting the Corinthians in these two chapters.

Ben Witherington's commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, Conflict and Community in Corinth, was most helpful at the level of the social and cultural context of the Collection.<sup>5</sup> He has two excurses in the midst of the commentary on 2 Corinthians 8-9. One discussed the larger issue of patronage in the ancient world and how the Collection would have been looked upon by the Corinthians, especially as it was carried out by Paul who refused financial support from Corinth.

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, *Black's New Testament Commentaries* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1973). See also *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *Black's New Testament Commentaries* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

Witherington's comments were brief, but he does bring in specific cultural background that is untouched by many other studies.

Ralph Martin, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, treated these two chapters with great exegetical detail.<sup>6</sup> His exegesis was very much in touch with previous comments and studies on the Collection, and he introduced a number of themes that have come up in studying the Collection: the theological grounding of the collection, the salvation-historical significance of the Collection, Paul's views on eschatology, and the Collection as a sign of genuine Gentile Christianity. Martin's commentary will be more fully evaluated later, and he serves this study well by his attention to the theological detail communicated in these two chapters.

Hans Dieter Betz has written a unique commentary which dealt exclusively with 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as separate administrative letters written by Paul.<sup>7</sup> Betz gave the most thorough discussion of the literary critical problems in the history of the interpretation of 2 Corinthians. Then, he proceeded in his commentary with an astute rhetorical analysis of chapters 8 and 9, relying primarily on a financial and Greco-Roman background for understanding Paul's argumentation and purpose. Even though this study will argue against Betz, his unique approach provided a helpful foil from other studies and offered a helpful breakdown of the two chapters.

One of the best and most thorough commentaries on 2 Corinthians has been written by Victor Furnish,<sup>8</sup> who presented an excellent and compelling discussion of the chronology and background of the Corinthian correspondence (one that will be largely adapted in this study). He set forth an excellent treatment of the argument of 2 Corinthians 8-9 and provided a number of insights regarding the structure of the passage, the allusions made by Paul, the theological undercurrents of the argument,

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<sup>6</sup> Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul, Hermeneia Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, II Corinthians, The Anchor Bible, vol. 32a (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984).



and the overall purpose of the two chapters. Furnish assessed the Collection as a dramatic demonstration on the part of Paul to emphasize and affirm the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians. His attention to the larger context of 2 Corinthians and the bases of Paul's arguments formed a powerful treatment of these two chapters.

### Key Articles and Chapters

Paul's relationship with Jerusalem is a topic naturally raised by a study of the Collection. This is exactly what Johannes Munck addressed in the tenth chapter of Paul and the Salvation of Mankind.<sup>9</sup> Munck's work was largely aimed at debunking the assumptions and conclusions of the Tübingen School which set Paul and Jerusalem at opposition. In doing so, he asserted that the Collection is a voluntary gift of aid to from the Gentiles to relieve poverty in Jerusalem. However, he went beyond this by claiming that Paul viewed the success of the Gentile mission as having implications for the salvation of the Jews. (This view will be dealt with thoroughly in Chapter 2 of this study.)

George Panikulam has written a wonderful study entitled Koinonia in the New Testament,<sup>10</sup> which looked at the concept of κοινωνία through the Collection. Panikulam described a cycle of grace coming from God through the Gentiles Christians to Jewish Christians and returning to God. He contended that this cycle of grace was intended to strengthen the bonds of sharing and fellowship among the churches.

Another important chapter on the Collection was written by Jouette Bassler in her topical study God and Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament.<sup>11</sup> Similar to Panikulam, she saw in the Collection a "chain of benefaction" filled with

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<sup>9</sup> Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, trans. Frank Clarke (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959).

<sup>10</sup> George Panikulam, Koinonia in the New Testament, *Analecta Biblica* 85 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Jouette Bassler, God and Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

divine grace.<sup>12</sup> She concluded that the Collection developed from an act of Christian charity to include even deeper affirmations of ecumenical solidarity among the churches.

Finally, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor treated the Collection in his synthetic study of the theology of 2 Corinthians (one of the few of its kind).<sup>13</sup> He regarded the Collection as a financial enterprise undertaken by the Apostle Paul (and thus the careful detail to process and motivation in 2 Corinthians) which eventually took on greater significance for Gentile Christianity, including its deep connection with the Jerusalem church.

### Monographs

For the most part (as revealed above) the Collection has been attended to on an occasional nature, usually as part of a commentary or topical study. However, there have been two foundational monographs written on the Collection which appeared at approximately the same time. Keith Nickle has penned a work<sup>14</sup> that formulated a very detailed reconstruction of the Pauline Collection with special attention given to how the Collection related to material in Acts and Galatians. Finally, he concluded that the Collection had significance as an act of Christian charity, a sign of Christian unity, and a (failed) eschatological sign.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is Dieter Georgi's book Remembering the Poor.<sup>15</sup> Georgi's main thesis and operative framework claimed that the Collection was far from a monolithic project undertaken by Paul. On the contrary, it was variously understood by Paul (and others connected with it), and more crucially went through several phases of success and failure, from the agreement

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<sup>12</sup> Bassler, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, New Testament Theology Series (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Keith Nickle, The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 48 (Naperville, Il.: Alec R. Allenson, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> Dieter Georgi, Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992). This was originally published in German in 1965.

made in Jerusalem to the final delivery made by Paul. While tracing this historical development, Georgi addressed several critical and theological issues pertaining to the Collection. He, like Nickle, engaged in a reconstruction of the Jerusalem Council as a starting point of the Collection. Georgi's unique contribution was his attempt to show the historical ebb and flow of the Collection project. Especially important are Georgi's views on the background of 2 Corinthians 8-9, his use of Philippians 4, and his conclusions on the final eschatological meaning of the Collection.

#### Literature on Pauline Ethics

A few key works on New Testament ethics have been written which give focused topical attention to the ethics of Paul within the NT. One of the most recent and most important of these is Wolfgang Schrage's The Ethics of the New Testament.<sup>16</sup> Schrage contended that all of Paul's ethics are rooted in Christology, though the Christological importance can be located under more specific topics such as sacrament, pneumatology, or eschatology. The audiences to which the apostle addressed his ethical exhortations were generally advised according to the example of Christ and the overriding principle of Christian love. So, the implication is that one should search for similar guidelines and motivations in the Collection.

A wonderful and extensive work by James Dunn The Theology of Paul the Apostle concludes with a discussion of Pauline ethics (which includes a section on the Collection).<sup>17</sup> Dunn claimed that the three main emphases of Pauline theology become the three main emphases of his ethics as well: justification by faith, participation in Christ, and the gift of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup> Dunn also said that the indicative and imperative is a helpful way to view Pauline ethics, and even though the indicative often comes logically prior, the two are very integrally connected.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, The Ethics of the New Testament, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, Theology, 634.

<sup>19</sup> Dunn, Theology, 630.

Dunn also stated (similar to Schrage) that the Love Commandment is the comprehensive epitome of ethics for Paul. As such it forms a type of core for understanding Pauline ethics, and this study will attend to this when examining the Collection from an ethical perspective.

An earlier work by Morton Enslin entitled The Ethics of Paul is also very helpful.<sup>20</sup> Enslin preferred to the root of Pauline ethics in another Pauline concept. He said, “It is through the mystical union of the believer with Christ that the new life is revealed and made possible.” Enslin then interpreted all of Pauline ethics as a natural outgrowth of a believers obedience and close communion with the Lord Jesus. He separated Paul from the duty orientation of the Stoics. And while he connected Paul more substantially with his background in Judaism, he said that Paul saw a real difference between the Law of Judaism and the obedient communion with the Lord Christ. Enslin then grouped the ethical material in Paul under four large headings: (1) separate yourselves from all that would defile, (2) be steadfast in all the conduct of life, (3) through love serve one another (which contains a brief discussion of the Collection), and (4) rejoice in the Lord always. Enslin’s core principle (“in Christ”) and multiplex approach to Paul’s ethics will contribute to the discussion of the Collection as an aspect of Pauline ethics.

Finally, there is Victor Furnish’s work Theology and Ethics in Paul,<sup>21</sup> which is very intentional about relating and integrating the more artificial categories of “ethics” and “theology” in Paul. Furnish argued that the two are really not differentiated in Paul’s writing, for both are intended as vehicles to communicate and confirm the gospel.<sup>22</sup> Furnish gathered the themes of Paul’s preaching under four headings: (1) this age and the age to come, (2) the law, sin, and righteousness, (3) the event of grace: death and resurrection, and (4) faith, love, and obedience. Paul’s ethics, he claimed, was a compound of the apostle’s theological,

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<sup>20</sup> Morton Scott Enslin, The Ethics of Paul (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957).

<sup>21</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968).

<sup>22</sup> Furnish, Theology, 110.

eschatological, and Christological implications.<sup>23</sup> For Furnish the indicative and imperative link together because the imperative command and the indicative realities are both “constitutive” of the new life.<sup>24</sup>

There is one final comment pertinent to this review. The focus of this study on viewing the Collection from the perspective of Pauline ethics and employing that interpretive approach for mining deeper into the theological meaning and ethical significance of the Collection was strongly formed by two seminal comments made by Furnish. Speaking of the Christological example employed in 2 Corinthians 8:8-10 Furnish said, “It is also the indicative upon which all the specific imperatives of the Christian life are ultimately based, including the apostle’s present appeal on behalf of the collection.”<sup>25</sup> This study will investigate these very matters of indicative and imperative in the Collection. Furnish has also claimed,

The interpreter of Paul’s ethic is called upon to work not only from the side of his ethical exhortations toward his theology, but also from the side of his theology toward his exhortations. Hopefully, the two approaches may thus converge on and illumine the problem of the indicative and imperative which lies deep in the heart of the Pauline gospel.<sup>26</sup>

It is the aim of this study to investigate this deep connection of ethics and theology within the Collection as a means to understanding it more thoroughly.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Hypotheses

The first hypothesis is that not all the previous approaches taken to the Collection are equally valid. Some are helpful, others offer limited insight, and some

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<sup>23</sup> Furnish, Theology, 213.

<sup>24</sup> Furnish, Theology, 225, 234.

<sup>25</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 417.

<sup>26</sup> Furnish, Theology, 111.

are misleading. Therefore, these must be evaluated when seeking to understand the Collection exegetically and theologically.

The second assumption is that the Ethical Approach offers the best way to view the Collection. The Collection can be understood and probed best by approaching it from the perspective of Pauline ethics in all its depth. The Ethical Approach also provides the best framework to incorporate the insights added by other approaches.

### Assumptions

The first assumption is that an interpretive approach must be taken when exegeting Biblical texts, and that such approaches are often based on prior conclusions but also grow dialogically out of exegetical study.

The second assumption is that such interpretive approaches may be evaluated by exegetical data in order to judge which approaches best fit the data.

The third assumption is that interpretive approaches and exegesis should be naturally followed by theological conclusions.

### Delimitations

This study will not evaluate all interpretive approaches to the Collection but only selected ones that seem to be primarily accessible and influential in the study of the Collection.

This study will address higher critical issues (e.g. authorship, date, partition theories, historical reconstruction) in so far as they affect the interpretive approaches and the understanding of the Collection.

### Study Overview

The second chapter of this study will delve into a categorization and thorough description of the various approaches to the Collection taken by previous studies. These will be categorized and described as objectively as possible as a basis for later evaluation.

The third chapter will set forth some pertinent decisions regarding higher critical and historical issues assumed in the exegesis. Then the bulk of this chapter

will engage in an in-depth exegesis of the key texts in the NT concerning the Collection and will conclude with a brief summary of important conclusions.

The fourth chapter will employ the exegetical data of Chapter 3 to evaluate the various interpretive approaches presented in Chapter 1.

The fifth chapter will then present an Ethical Approach to interpreting the Collection. This will involve a brief discussion of the broader strokes of Pauline ethics which will then be applied to the interpretation of the Collection. This approach will be defended as the best way to understand the Collection.

The sixth and final chapter will review and summarize the conclusions concerning the approaches surveyed and evaluated in this study. The theological fruits of this study will then be presented in a brief synthesis.

## Chapter 2: Analysis of Interpretive Approaches

### Preliminary Remarks

It is necessary to set forth here the method and presuppositions that will operate in this attempt to describe, analyze, and categorize some of the previous interpretive approaches taken to the Collection. The first is the more obvious and simple. When categorizing the various interpretive approaches, it will become clear that the categories are not mutually exclusive. In fact, rarely will an interpreter employ only one of the different approaches, and often several will flow together simultaneously. However, most interpreters will emphasize one approach over another because of prior decisions which relate to the text or context of Paul. Also, interpreters will often display a hierarchy of conclusions which displays the primary importance of one theme or approach over other secondary affirmations. This practice will be seen when an interpreter has dealt with passages that are ambiguous and require a reliance on contextual and background clues as evidence. Furthermore, many of the conclusions from the various approaches may overlap, yet within those sets of conclusions a hierarchy is often discernible which reveals the interpreter's ultimate conclusion as to the meaning and significance of the Collection. This ultimate conclusion will frequently reveal the lines of the interpretive approach.

The next comment concerns the relation of interpretive approaches and conclusions just mentioned. It is necessary to expose the dialogical relationship between conclusions and approaches. It is a fallacy to think that exegesis may proceed on a solely objective basis or, at the other extreme, that interpreters are simply reading in their foregoing conclusions which then completely obscures any evidence. Indeed, the two poles balance one another. Objectivity is a goal that we spiral toward, but former conclusions, theological framework, and personal commitments all contribute to a study (this work is not excepted). Within the passage of a single book, decisions on the meaning and structure of the context will guide the interpretation of less transparent passages. When dealing with a topic like the Collection, which involves multiple Pauline epistles, one must also realize the



decisions an interpreter makes regarding Pauline chronology and authorship, as well as the way the interpreter relates the various passages to one another (e.g. Are Paul's comments in Romans or 2 Corinthians more important for understanding how Paul views the Collection, and why?). Often, conclusions regarding the exegesis and meaning of one epistle will be used as a guide for understanding Paul's thought in another epistle. There is a dialogical relationship between theology and exegesis that cannot fully be unraveled but should be examined. The study of exegetical approaches aims at this very examination.

Therefore, in the following analysis and categorization this study will seek to be descriptive and delay evaluation for a later chapter. The primary approach of the interpreter will serve as the means for categorization, but where there is clear overlap it will be noted. The categories are useful tools, but they cannot completely capture or define an approach. This chapter aims to be selective and representative by analyzing the primary approaches to the Collection while realizing the impossibility of addressing all approaches. The following headings will be employed for discussing and categorizing the various interpretive approaches: the Eschatological Approach, the Hellenistic Approach, the Evolutionary Approach, the Economic Approach, and the Ecumenical Approach.

### The Eschatological Approach

The eschatological approach states that Paul sees the Collection as his own contribution to the fulfillment of the OT prophecies and the coming climax of salvation history. Often, this approach relies primarily on the material in Romans 9-11 (and correlated with Romans 15:25-33) as determinative for how Paul understood his own ministry and, more specifically, the role of the Collection in that ministry.

The modern fountainhead of this approach is Johannes Munck in his book Paul and the Salvation of Mankind first published in 1954. Munck's book consists of a series of individual chapters which address some of the background issues to the study of the apostle, a few studies of particular epistles, and finally some topical issues. Chapter 10, "Paul and Jerusalem," is crucial for this study; Chapter 9, "Israel

and the Gentiles,” synthesizes some of Munck’s perspectives in the book. Munck argued for a great deal of congruence between the Jewish and Gentile branches of the church, and more particularly between Jewish Christianity and Paul.<sup>1</sup> This thesis is largely directed against the Tübingen school which controlled German Biblical studies for years and postulated a sharp division between Paul and Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Munck asserted that there was mostly continuity, but the one difference is in their theologies of mission. The Jewish Christians envisioned a mission primarily to Jews which would incorporate a mission to the Gentiles. This mission to the Gentiles would later result in a large conversion of Gentiles to the true (and ostensibly Jewish) faith (e.g. Matt. 10:5).<sup>3</sup> Paul on the other hand, viewed the overwhelming rejection of the Gospel by the Jews as God’s sign that the mission was to be redirected to the Gentiles. The Gentiles’ faith would then become an impetus for the conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11).<sup>4</sup> This perspective is absolutely integral to Munck’s understanding of the Collection as revealed in his tenth Chapter.<sup>5</sup>

Munck began his discussion by highlighting the strong Jewish background of Paul and his deep connection to Jerusalem. He then went on to debunk Karl Holl’s thesis that the collection for the poor was really imposed on Paul at the Jerusalem Council in order to set the Gentiles in submission to the saints (Holl says “poor” equals “saints”) at Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Munck did this by showing that “poor” really means the poverty-stricken Jewish Christians, not saints in general. Furthermore, Paul’s emphasis on the voluntary nature of the Collection in 2 Corinthians would be flagrantly deceptive if Holl were correct.<sup>7</sup> In responding to Holl and the Tübingen

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<sup>1</sup> Munck, 279.

<sup>2</sup> Munck, 247.

<sup>3</sup> Munck, 255ff.

<sup>4</sup> Munck, 264. Note that all of the above notes from Munck came from the ninth chapter of Paul and the Salvation of Mankind.

<sup>5</sup> See Munck’s chart and description of differences on 276.

<sup>6</sup> Munck, 288.

<sup>7</sup> Munck, 288.

school Munck outlined Paul's motives in the Collection as: (1) to encourage voluntary giving, (2) a gift intended to relieve immediate need, and (3) a gift demonstrating church ecumenism.<sup>8</sup> If one were to read only this portion of Munck he would appear to mostly fit into the Economic or Ecumenical approaches to be discussed below. However, Munck's perspectives on Paul's theology of mission mentioned above took the lead in determining the real significance of the Collection for Paul, one which subordinates the voluntary, ecumenical, and economic nature of the gift to its primary purpose.

Munck proceeded to discuss the importance of the various Gentile congregations that participated in the Collection. The conflict at Corinth was most dangerous because it threatened the Collection as a representation of the "fullness" of the Gentiles which must come before the full salvation of the Jews.<sup>9</sup> The participation of the Gentile congregations was necessary to Paul's goal for the Collection. Here one can begin to see how Munck really viewed the significance of the Collection through Paul's argument in Romans 9-11. In Romans 10:19 and 11:13 Paul spoke of the power of jealousy in convincing Israel. Paul seems to say that the Gentile mission will so provoke the Jews that, out of jealousy, the Jews will embrace the way of righteousness by faith. Munck claimed that the success of the Gentile mission was Paul's way of participating in the orchestration of the coming eschatological conversion of the Jews.<sup>10</sup> Paul saw the Collection as the primary demonstration of the success of the Gentile mission and thus the final provoking prick that would cause the Jews to return to God. Therefore, the primary purpose of the Collection was as a tool in Paul's missiology, to bring about the conversion of Israel by provoking them to jealousy by this sign of the work of God among the Gentiles.

Munck did comment on the importance of the Collection as an evidential symbol of unity between the Jewish and Gentile branches of the Church, but he

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<sup>8</sup> Munck, 289.

<sup>9</sup> Munck, 291ff.

<sup>10</sup> Munck, 301.

seems to give the primary motive of Paul in the Collection to his eschatological and missiological theology. Munck nowhere tried to integrate the eschatological and ecumenical aspects of the Collection. It is possible that Munck believed that Paul employed the voluntary and ecumenical nature of the gift as a way to motivate the Gentiles to proper sharing while considering the larger significance of the project to lie in the catalytic nature of the success of the Gentile mission in leading to the conversion of the Jews, a significance that Paul would have had to leave implicit when exhorting the Gentiles to give.

We have treated Munck thoroughly in order to introduce the Eschatological Approach. Now, we will move onto Keith Nickle's work which also employs the eschatological approach with other unique emphases. First of all, Nickle devoted a large portion early in the book to examining the date and substance of the Jerusalem Council. He concluded that one must combine Acts 15 with Acts 11:27-30 (and 12:25) and also Galatians 2:1-10 with an important excision. The material concerning the Apostolic decree in 15, such as the large meeting and the letter to the Gentiles, really belongs in Acts 21:25ff.<sup>11</sup> Judas and Silas are really guarantors of the Collection and not of the Apostolic Decree. Thus, Nickle decided that this early meeting was a congenial one. It involved an initial gift of famine relief from Antioch which would be the prototype for Paul's Collection, and it resulted in a mutual agreement of simultaneous yet separate missionary spheres. However, the later confrontation with Peter at Antioch forced Paul to shift the emphasis of the Collection from a simple act of charity to the needy to a means of restoring unity between the Jewish and Gentile branches of the church. A premature analysis of Nickle at this point might place him in the Ecumenical approach. However, a further investigation of his conclusions will reveal that he truly belongs in the Eschatological Approach.

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<sup>11</sup> Nickle, 51-56. This is a very involved argument. While it is not the intent of this paper to dismantle it, especially at this juncture, it must be said that Nickle's reconstruction is very problematic. The position of this study will be that Acts 11:27ff equals Gal. 2 and that the Antioch conflict took place before the Jerusalem Council which is accurately represented in Acts 15.

Next, Nickle carefully studied the Collection in light of the Jewish Temple Tax and other provisions for the poor. His conclusion was that Paul substantially borrowed from the strategy of the Temple tax in the way he organized and delivered the Collection (employing major cities and representatives of those cities in the gathering and delivery). He also borrowed from the meaning of the Temple Tax as a sign of unity between two groups, now between Jewish and Gentile Christians instead of Diaspora and Palestinian Jews.<sup>12</sup>

After this exploration, Nickle highlighted and discussed three areas under the theological significance of the Collection. The first he describes as “The Collection as an Act of Christian Charity.”<sup>13</sup> Nickle introduced a few ideas here that perhaps incipiently point to the ethical approach that will be presented later in this study, for Nickle headed one section “Charity as a Natural Consequence of Pauline Theology.” However, it becomes clear, both in the contours of the discussion of this act of charity and the key words which Nickle dealt with (κοινωνία, διακονία, χάρις), that the Collection was primarily a charitable act which contributed to and built up Christian unity<sup>14</sup> as well as an act of helping the needy.<sup>15</sup> Only in a minor way does Nickle explore how these exhortations are rooted in Pauline theology, limiting himself mostly to the idea of Christian unity by divine love. This first significance is really a prolegomena to the second area which Nickle entitled “The Collection and the Unity of the Church.”<sup>16</sup> Here Nickle more specifically dealt with his reconstruction of the break between Jews and Gentiles after the Antioch incident in Galatians 2:11ff. The point of the Collection becomes to heal this breach and demonstrate the genuineness of Gentile Christianity to the Jewish believers. Nickle seems to construct these areas of significance in increasing importance. Therefore, it appears that the acts of charity might be an ideal in Pauline theology (and ethics),

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<sup>12</sup> Nickle, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Nickle, 102.

<sup>14</sup> See particularly, Nickle, 103, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Nickle, 101, 110.

<sup>16</sup> Nickle, 111.

but it was the exigencies of the growing break in Christianity that formed the even more pressing, immediate, and driving issue behind the Collection (Here we see a bit of the Evolutionary approach in Nickle, but only in a small degree). However, the greatest significance is yet to come, and it reveals why Nickle is classified under the Eschatological Approach.

Nickle asserted that the Jerusalem church (and indeed Jesus!?) anticipated the conversion of Israel which would then extend in mission to the Gentiles. This theological perspective caused the hostility against the Pauline mission (which was revealed in later chapters of Acts.<sup>17</sup> However, Nickle, like Munck, saw Paul's paradigm for the Collection in Romans 9-11, where Paul takes up a minority strain of the OT and expected the following progression: Israel rejects the gospel, the Gentiles accept the gospel, jealousy then leads the Jews to true conversion.<sup>18</sup> Paul intended that the Collection would be the great sign of the grace of God among the Gentiles (and thus why the number of delegates is more important than the small sum of money) which would provoke the Jews to finally return to the gospel. The "many thanksgivings to God" in 2 Corinthians 9:15 and the "fullness of blessing" in Romans 15:29 are the praise of this mass of eschatologically converted Jews that Paul envisions as a result of the Collection.<sup>19</sup> Nickle then contended that Paul spoke very little of this to his Gentile audience because it would seem to put himself in ultimate service to the Jews (and not the Gentile churches for whom he was an apostle!). This eschatological hope of Paul that included a unified church, a mass conversion of Jews, and possibly even the Second Coming was Paul's ultimate and deepest meaning and motivation behind the Collection according to Nickle.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, and more briefly, we will examine a more recent interpreter who has employed the Eschatological Approach, Ralph Martin. Actually, Martin's approach

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<sup>17</sup> Nickle, 130-132.

<sup>18</sup> Nickle, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Nickle, 136. This is a key example where an interpretive approach fundamentally determines the meaning of texts that are not immediately clear.

<sup>20</sup> Nickle, 142.

was very similar to Nickle's in emphasizing both the ecumenical and eschatological purposes of Paul in the Collection. Martin also concluded that both the eschatological and ecumenical hopes of Paul in the Collection failed miserably.<sup>21</sup> Martin's perspective is illumined in a few key places. First, in his introductory comments on the Collection, he listed Paul's four main goals in the Collection: (1) to fulfill his promise in Galatians 2:10, (2) to communicate the importance of compassion and "sharing," (3) to try to bind together Jewish and Gentile believers, and (4) to make possible the eschatological fullness of Israel.<sup>22</sup> Note here, the final and climactic position of Paul's eschatological intentions. Martin identified this as Paul's "salvation-historical approach" which was to incorporate Jews and Gentiles into the people of God.<sup>23</sup>

The next juncture for noting the Eschatological Approach as employed by Martin is in his interpretation of 2 Corinthians 8:14, "It is a question of fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance might be for your need." Martin interpreted this verse as follows: The possibility of the Jewish Christians offering financial aid in return to the Gentile churches in the future was very improbable. Therefore, what Paul was alluding to here was the eschatological "fullness" of Israel from which the Gentiles will receive an abundance of eschatological and spiritual blessings.<sup>24</sup> This is another example of how an interpretive approach will guide and indeed determine the exegesis of a debatable text. Martin's prior decision that Paul simply could not have been referring to reciprocal economic aid, and his conclusion on the eschatological nature of the Collection caused him to read 8:14 in this way. Martin's second excursus on the Collection (pp. 268-270) is a brief discussion of Romans 9-11 and

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<sup>21</sup> Martin, 258.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, 251.

<sup>23</sup> Martin, 251.

<sup>24</sup> Martin, 266-67. See Romans 11:15 for the background to this concept. Note again how Romans 9-11 is the primary paradigm for understanding Paul's purpose in the Collection for those employing the Eschatological Approach.

how Paul anticipates the outworking of salvation history. Martin, like Nickle and Munck, claimed that the Collection is key to Paul's hopes. But, Martin added the emphasis that this eschatological vision is of one unified people of God -- "All Israel" in Romans 11:25 is the fullness of both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>25</sup> This places Martin near the Ecumenical Approach, but it is clear that his Ecumenical Approach functions within the Eschatological Approach and not vice versa.

There are a two main points in summary. We have seen how crucial Romans 9-11 is for interpreters who take the Eschatological Approach. These chapters form the paradigm of Paul's thought out of which the Collection emerges. Also note that none of the interpreters employs this approach alone, and they often combine it with an ecumenical emphasis (that the Collection is intended to show genuine Gentile Christianity and bridge the breach between the major branches of the church). However, these concerns are subordinated to the more radical eschatological meaning of the Collection.

### The Hellenistic Approach

Only one author represents the Hellenistic Approach, Hans Dieter Betz. While his opinion is in a minority it calls for serious attention for a few reasons: (1) his approach is a critiquing foil to other approaches, (2) his unique assumptions concerning the background of Pauline thought and writing, and (3) his conclusions concerning the operation of the Collection.

First of all, Betz's commentary was aimed proving that 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 were separate and unique administrative letters written by Paul to Corinth. He traced the long history of this debate and then constructed his intense rhetorical analysis on the basis of the two individual letters preserved here.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Martin, 270.

<sup>26</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, 3-38. I must comment that I see this as very poor methodology. Betz postulated the division of the two chapters and then went on to analyze them as separate rhetorical units. From this he seemed to conclude that since they can be analyzed as separate units, they *must* be separate letters and thus in turn justifies his own prior separation of them. Witherington



Betz's Hellenistic Approach is characterized by three main aspects. Betz analyzed the two chapters on the basis of Greco-Roman rhetorical practices and theories. Second, Betz saw Paul's ideological background as being primarily and determinatively Hellenistic (and not Jewish). Paul's vocabulary and arguments are most deeply indebted to Hellenistic precedents. Finally, these two letters fall clearly into the categories of Hellenistic finance and benevolence. The purpose and language is rooted in Hellenistic financial administration. We will look at each of these in turn and lift up some examples to illumine them.

First, it is very clear from the table of contents and the historical introduction concerning the partition of chapters 8 and 9 that Betz was thoroughly committed to the rhetorical analysis of these letters. He insisted that this is the best way to understand the writing of Paul. One must always heed the Greco-Roman rhetorical and literary background for Paul while allowing for the apostle's own creativity.<sup>27</sup> Betz then went on to break down each of the chapters according to typical rhetorical structure. Here is the example from the verses of chapter 8: Exordium -- 1-5, Narratio -- 6, Propositio -- 7-8, Probatio -- 9-15, Commendation -- 16-23, Authorization -- 23, Peroratio -- 24.<sup>28</sup>

Second, concerning Paul's ideological background, Betz frequently pointed out how the apostle has adopted and adapted common ancient and Hellenistic principles and modes of thought into this Christian document. Early on Betz discussed the term ἀπλοτής. He claimed that this term, as employed here by Paul, referred to the general ancient ideal of the hospitality of "simple folk" who lived simple lives.<sup>29</sup> On 8:5 Betz commented, "At this point, Paul introduced a concept which was not only basic to his own theology but to ancient religion in general."

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(Conflict and Community) and Furnish (II Corinthians) both presented better argued alternatives.

<sup>27</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 130.

<sup>28</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 38-40.

<sup>29</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 44.

This is in reference to the giving of oneself in thankful sacrifice back to God.<sup>30</sup> In 8:10-12 (the second proof of the proposition in 8:7-8) Paul drew upon the common rhetorical topic of “expediency” as a motivation for the Collection. In other words, it is only proper and appropriate to follow through on what one has begun, a standard form of Greco-Roman deliberative rhetoric.<sup>31</sup> The commended characteristic of Titus as “zealous” (σπουδῇ) was a frequent and prominent quality of recommendation in Hellenistic administrative letters.<sup>32</sup> The reception of Titus and the other delegates is encouraged on the basis of typical expectations for hospitality in the Hellenistic world.<sup>33</sup> This perspective was most clearly revealed as Betz dealt with 9:6-15. He argued in an excursus on “Paul’s Agrarian Theology” (98-100) that the roots of Paul’s argumentation here are from “folk wisdom” well known in the Greek world (which had influenced Jewish literature, see p. 99). Betz stated that “it is remarkable that he (Paul) did so little to make these ideas Christian.”<sup>34</sup> Even in the quotation from Psalm 111:9 (LXX), Betz contended that the OT has simply become a vessel for Paul to express common notions of ancient religion, both folk and classical.<sup>35</sup>

The third aspect of the Hellenistic Approach as seen in Betz was that the primary literary and life setting for these letters was that of financial administration. This is revealed early in the commentary at the portion on 8:3 where Betz made a characteristic statement that would recur in various ways: “The terminology Paul employed in this connection comes from the area of administration, in particular

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<sup>30</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 47. Statements very similar to this one about the common ancient background to Paul’s thought can be found throughout the commentary.

<sup>31</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 84.

<sup>34</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 99.

<sup>35</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 112.

financial administration.”<sup>36</sup> This particularly referred to the terms δύναμις, μαρτυρῶ, and αὐθαίρετος. Similar comments to the financial background of terms are made regarding ἐπιτελέω (8:6), παράκλησις (8:17), ὑπὲρ (8:23), αὐτάρκεια (9:8), ὁμολογία (9:13), and others. The term “homologia” is an excellent example of how defining this approach is. In most translations and commentaries this word is understood as “confession” or some closely related idea. Generally, this is attributed to the obedience which reveals the genuineness of their faith in the gospel of Christ. However, drawing from the context of financial administration, Betz asserted that homologia most accurately referred to an official legal document that contained stipulations from the Jerusalem church concerning the Collection, and that the surrounding material in 9:13 represents phrases from that legal document.<sup>37</sup> The Hellenistic Approach has certainly caused a difference in interpretation here. The financial administration aspect of these letters was most apparent in Betz’s interpretation of 8:16-24 concerning Titus and the other representatives. This section was a letter of official commendation and authorization, and it should be interpreted in light of such documents.<sup>38</sup>

In summary, the Hellenistic Approach has particular impact on interpretation in three areas. The breakdown (and separation) of chapters 8 and 9 is carried out on the basis of Greco-Roman rhetorical practices. The ideological and even religious background of the apostle is essentially from the general realm of ancient folk wisdom and classical Hellenistic religion. Finally, the world of financial administration is the key to unlocking the meaning of several important terms, and indeed sets the purpose of the Collection process as one that is primarily concerned with the generous donation of money and its guaranteed delivery to the official recipients.

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<sup>36</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 61.

<sup>37</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 70.

### The Evolutionary Approach

Again, there is one very influential representative for this approach, Dieter Georgi and his work Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem. Indeed, the title and the very first paragraph of the Introduction reveal Georgi's approach. He said, "The story of Paul's collection for the church of Jerusalem is full of dramatic development. This book has been written to trace that development in its historical context."<sup>39</sup> The Evolutionary approach, as seen in Georgi's work, emphasizes that the Collection went through various stages of development regarding its cause, meaning, and purpose. While there is some continuity to be found in Paul's project, it is more appropriate to point out the transformations that occurred in its historical evolution.

Georgi opened by discussing the Jerusalem Council. He asserted that Acts 15 refers to the same event recorded in Galatians 2 (and also should be combined with the misplaced reference in Acts 11:27-30). This was a conference of equals where a mutual agreement was made for independent missions.<sup>40</sup> The bifurcation in the church suggested by these independent missions was to be overcome by the strategy mentioned in Galatians 2:10. The Jerusalem church identified itself as "the poor," a special and rich designation of themselves as the unique eschatological people of God.<sup>41</sup> The Jerusalem Church's perspective on the centrality of Zion in eschatology (as the locale of God's action and the pilgrim goal of the nations) led to the Collection being a means of the Gentiles recognizing the special eschatological role of Jerusalem and the church there, as well as aiding them financially.<sup>42</sup> This is how the Jerusalem church saw the Collection. However, Paul's views are not revealed here and were probably only fully developed later.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Georgi, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Georgi, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Georgi, 34.

<sup>42</sup> Georgi, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Georgi, 42.

Yet, this state of affairs was not to last long. The conflict with Peter described in Galatians 2:11-13 led to Paul's estrangement from Jerusalem, Barnabas, and even the Antioch church. He now set out on his own. This explains why Paul never mentioned the Jerusalem origination of the Collection (e.g. in 2 Corinthians 8-9) and shows why Paul employed the past-tense aorists in Galatians 2:10 concerning a *previous* zeal that he had.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Paul began a second and new beginning to the Collection under his own initiative. Unfortunately, this coincided with the eruption of opposition both Galatia and Corinth. Paul probably employed the Collection in Corinth as a way to point to the crucial importance of the historical Jesus and earliest witnesses in Jerusalem against the rising tide of mysticism (as seen in the resurrection polemics in 1 Corinthians 15).<sup>45</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 reflects a state of affairs where Paul was confident of the Corinthians' willingness to contribute. All that was needed were some practical suggestions. This willingness continued to be a mark of the Corinthians with regard to the Collection (see 2 Corinthians 8 and 9), but Paul was forced to change his travel plans before arriving to gather the collected money (perhaps to try and patch things up in Jerusalem).<sup>46</sup> However, Paul's position in Corinth took a turn for the worse because of certain Jewish-Christian detractors, a failed visit, and the tearful letter of 2 Corinthians 10-13, much of which focused upon suspicion of Paul regarding the Collection funds.<sup>47</sup>

Georgi then looked to the letter of thanks for the Philippian Collection in Philippians 4:10-20. The exact amount of knowledge that the Philippians had about the Collection is unclear. However, Georgi argued that this epistle was written about the same time as the other Collection texts with several parallels in content and meaning. Therefore, Georgi stated that he would appropriate Philippians 4:10-

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<sup>44</sup> Georgi, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Georgi, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Georgi, 58.

<sup>47</sup> Georgi, 60-61.

20 “as an exegetical model for the further interpretation of all Pauline literature pertaining to the collection.”<sup>48</sup>

Georgi wrote two in-depth chapters regarding the argument and meaning of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. This material will be evaluated and employed in the exegesis below, but another concern is more important here. After the recent fallout between Paul and Corinth (cf. 2 Corinthians 10-13), Paul had to resume the Collection effort there a second time. The pertinent history goes as follows: Titus made a long and successful visit to Corinth, Paul moved on to Macedonia, Titus returned with good news and was dispatched (with two others) by Paul to finalize the Collection. Georgi viewed 2 Corinthians 8 as a letter of recommendation for the delegates to Corinth, and chapter 9 as a circular letter written a few weeks later to the whole region of Achaia concerning the Collection.<sup>49</sup> It is in these later and more developed letters that Paul finally engages in a theological argument for the Collection. The Collection was now a tool for unity and a sign of Gentile Christianity.

Finally, we come to the latest text on the Collection as found in Romans. Here again Georgi displayed development in the meaning and purpose of the Collection. First of all, the term “poor” is now purely economical and no longer eschatological.<sup>50</sup> It is at this point (late in the discussion) that Georgi adapted the Eschatological Approach. He stated that for Paul the salvation of the Gentiles is the rising tide. Therefore, Paul has formulated (in Romans 9-11) a missiological and eschatological understanding of the Gentile believers provoking the Jews to faith. The eschatological nature of the mission to the Gentiles is now spearheaded by the Collection.<sup>51</sup> Here also, Georgi picked up the Ecumenical Approach when he discussed that the Collection becomes the final seal (Rom. 15:28) of the genuine effects of the gospel among the pagans leading to a fullness of thanksgiving which

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<sup>48</sup> Georgi, 66.

<sup>49</sup> Georgi traces this condensed version on pp. 68-79.

<sup>50</sup> Georgi, 114.

<sup>51</sup> Georgi, 118-119.

binds the Jewish and Gentile branches of the church together.<sup>52</sup> Georgi then closed with a brief discussion on the conveyance and collapse of the Collection due to the tensions in Jerusalem.

Georgi displayed a depth of probing study in which he claimed to have found truly how to link the differing texts and perspectives on the Collection, explicating a complicated historical development of the project. He adapted aspects of the Eschatological, Ecumenical, and even the Economic Approaches, but he set them in a series of developments through which the Collection passed. This is the core of the Evolutionary Approach which would assert that the Collection must be studied in its distinctive phases in order to grasp the whole by interpreting the various parts.

### The Economic Approach

This approach focuses primarily upon the economic realities and implications of the Collection, particularly as they are expressed in 2 Corinthians 8-9. In this approach, the primary purpose of the Collection was to aid the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem. Thus it is the monetary and financial matters that are most central and most crucial to the Collection. This emphasis on 2 Corinthians most naturally finds expression in commentaries on that book, but, as seen in Martin, a commentary can employ other approaches.

This approach is characterized by taking one particular setting of one text concerning the Collection and employing it as the cornerstone upon which the whole of the Collection will be interpreted (This could be deemed a “Situational” Approach). The vast majority of interpreters who fall under this approach (and all of the ones to be surveyed below) choose 2 Corinthians as the lens through which to understand the whole of the Collection project. Some, such as Bengt Holmberg, have made the Galatians 2:10 reference the key text, but have not had widespread acceptance.<sup>53</sup> However, because of the intensiveness and extensiveness of 2

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<sup>52</sup> Georgi, 120-121.

<sup>53</sup> On this point see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 412-413. See Bengt Holmberg, Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 35ff.

Corinthians 8-9, it has been the primary locus for such attention. 2 Corinthians 8-9 focuses upon the economic issues and so this approach has been deemed “Economical.”

C. K. Barrett will be our first example. He saw 7:5-14 as preparing for the shift in discussion that occurs in chapter 8. Barrett did draw on Romans to gain a more full-orbed understanding of grace as Paul employs it here. However, very quickly he commented on how the concern in 2 Corinthians 8-9 is financial, more specifically Christians meeting economic need and seeking to maintain an equality of goods.<sup>54</sup> Barrett demonstrated how Paul was going far beyond his comments in 1 Corinthians 16 to encourage a deeper commitment to the Collection here. The recommendation of the representatives in 8:16-23 further reflects Barrett’s emphasis on the situation on hand in Corinth.

Barrett claimed that chapter 9 deals with the same setting as chapter 8 without needlessly repeating its contents.<sup>55</sup> More space is given to the concrete details of this situation as it relates to the Collection, as Paul discussed the possibilities of future visits. Barrett’s approach comes out most clearly in comments on 9:6-15. He portrayed this as the high point in the presentation of the meaning of the Collection. The first primary purpose is liberality and sincerity (both related to ἀπλοτῆς) in giving.<sup>56</sup> This theme was touched upon in various ways in 8:1-10, but now it receives a thorough treatment. It is the cycle of gracious giving that is most crucial to the Collection, and especially important is how Paul exhorts the Corinthians to participate in this gracious giving (see below how Panikulam treats this same topic). One significant aspect of the Collection is how generous giving is important to the faith and life of the Corinthians themselves (see 8:7 and 9:6-10).<sup>57</sup> The second purpose of the Collection is the thanksgiving that it was to produce. This thanksgiving from the Jerusalem Christians would be due to the gift of aid and the

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<sup>54</sup> Barrett, 226-227.

<sup>55</sup> Barrett, 232.

<sup>56</sup> Barrett, 236.

<sup>57</sup> Barrett, 238.



genuine Christianity which it demonstrates.<sup>58</sup> Barrett perceived the Collection project largely in light of how he interpreted Paul's dealings with the Corinthians, and he concluded that the entire project (as seen through 2 Corinthians) points to the historical rooting of Paul's gospel addressing present needs; it is not lost in mystical apocalyptic speculation.<sup>59</sup>

In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Victor Furnish explicitly stated what he saw as being the primary motivations behind Paul's deep concern for the Collection. Furnish placed first (and probably first in importance) the fact that Paul was "undoubtedly concerned" to ameliorate the impoverishment of the needy saints in Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup> The famine-relief visit of Acts 11:27ff was probably a prototype for this, and it is clear that Paul emphasized the Collection as a charitable service (διακονία) for those in need, arising from genuine Christian love.<sup>61</sup> Second, Furnish mentioned the significant theological meaning that Paul poured into the Collection, a significance largely revealed by the frequent and rich theological vocabulary he employed as synonyms for the Collection (χάρις, διακονία, λειτουργία, εὐλογία, κοινωνία). He asserted that the last term is particularly important, for "Paul seems to have promoted the collection among his largely Gentile congregations as a tangible expression of the unity of Jew and Gentile in the gospel."<sup>62</sup> This "partnership" was both an expression of love and a continuation of the mutual partnership agreed upon at the Jerusalem Council (Gal. 2).<sup>63</sup> Last, of all Furnish mildly affirmed the Eschatological approach, as presented by Munck, as a third motivation in Paul, seen especially in Romans. It appears (from this presentation and the surrounding commentary) that Furnish has set these forth in order of

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<sup>58</sup> Barrett, 241.

<sup>59</sup> Barrett, 241.

<sup>60</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 411.

<sup>61</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 411.

<sup>62</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 411. Here Furnish revealed a healthy dose of the Ecumenical Approach.

<sup>63</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 412.

importance from greater to lesser: economic aid, real theological overtones of unity, and a possible eschatological aspect.

Furnish exhibited other notable aspects of the Economic Approach through recurring elements in his exegetical and synthetic comments on the text. First, Furnish did see some development in the Collection (the Evolutionary Approach), but this is micro-evolution rather than macro-evolution for Furnish saw more continuity than discontinuity.<sup>64</sup> Also, contrary to Betz, Furnish viewed the terms dealing with the Collection (specifically διακονία, αὐτάρκεια, λειτουργία) as having theological and religious meanings in 2 Corinthians, as opposed to secular and financial. Furthermore, it is vital that the gift be willing and voluntary. The Macedonians became the paradigm of this in the very beginning of Paul's discussion of the Collection in ch. 8. They are an example of αὐθαίρετος and ἀπλοτής which point to the voluntary and simple generosity that the Corinthians should exhibit.<sup>65</sup> This is accentuated further whenever Paul spoke of the appropriate zeal (σπουδή) or readiness (προθυμία) that should characterize Christian action.<sup>66</sup>

Furnish also mentioned (but did not develop fully) the fact that God's grace is the driving source of all giving and supplying, as Paul stressed with regard to the Collection.<sup>67</sup> Such giving not only begins with God, but it is a Christian grace that ought to be sought after in a healthy Christian life. Paul exhorted the Corinthians that such giving really benefits them as well as the recipients (cf. 8:7)<sup>68</sup> This giving which is a sign of Christian maturity has the further benefit of signaling the authenticity of their faith and the success of Paul's mission. This would result in overflowing praise and thanks to God (particularly from Jewish Christians) for the grace He has poured out for salvation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 409-10.

<sup>65</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 400.

<sup>66</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 406.

<sup>67</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 413, 447.

<sup>68</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 433.

<sup>69</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 451.

Last, to complete this investigation of the Economic approach, we will examine the pertinent chapter from Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's work on the theology of 2 Corinthians. Murphy-O'Connor similarly seemed to place primary stress on the economic aspects of the Collection which aims at supporting a Jerusalem church which had been full of needy persons from the beginning but has now exhausted its resources (cf. data in Acts).<sup>70</sup> However, as Jewish nationalistic sentiments intensified in Jerusalem (again as revealed in the latter chapters of Acts) the Collection developed additional meaning as an expression of free and authentic Christian love which would hopefully bind Jewish and Gentile believers together (a bit of the Ecumenical Approach).<sup>71</sup> He also stressed (like Barrett and Furnish) the importance of voluntary giving, the giving as a sign of genuine Gentile Christianity, and the final goal of glorifying God. But Murphy-O'Connor also offered two particularly insightful aspects in his work. He came down very definitively on the role of reciprocity. Whereas other commentators have downplayed or denied that the Jerusalem church could ever economically aid the Gentiles (cf. Martin above), Murphy-O'Connor asserted that such reciprocity was crucial to Paul's argument. In fact, one of the main inhibiting factors in Corinth was their own fear that such giving might impoverish them. To this Paul answered that in the future Jerusalem might share with them.<sup>72</sup> In his explanation of 9:6-15, the ideal of full supply for needs and giving portrayed here by Paul was really dependent (in Paul's mind) on the willingness of Christian communities to be used by God to supply the needs of others in dire straits.<sup>73</sup>

The second key aspect of the Corinthian situation not yet mentioned is the role and meaning of the representatives who are thoroughly recommended in 8:16-23 and perhaps discussed further in 9:1-5. Murphy-O'Connor claimed that the representatives are part of the necessary human instruments for the Collection.

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<sup>70</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 76.

<sup>71</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 77.

<sup>72</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 84-5, commenting on 8:13-15.

<sup>73</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 93.

They guaranteed that the Collection would be a blameless gift of good will, which was necessary if the gift would bring glory to God (see 8:19).<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, these representatives themselves became another exemplary model of zeal and goodwill for the Corinthians to follow.<sup>75</sup> This undergirds the importance of human instruments in God's plan, since the Macedonians and the various representatives all play key roles in the execution and meaning of the Collection. Thus the representatives played a theological as well as a practical role. They model the very grace that Paul desired to be realized in the Corinthians. They became a precursor and a microcosm of the Jerusalem church, as both benefit from the generosity of the Corinthians. Finally, their personal participation certifies the honesty of the gift and binds the diverse churches together.

### The Ecumenical Approach

Almost every interpreter discussed above has made reference to the Collection as having ecumenical significance as a meaningful sign of unity between relatively alienated Jewish and Gentile Christians. If there is one aspect of the Collection that all interpreters might agree upon to some degree it would be that Paul intended the Collection to partly heal the breach between these two branches of Christianity. Even in light of this general assent, it is helpful to examine two authors that especially focus upon this aspect.

The first author for consideration reveals his perspective in the very title of his work, Koinonia in the New Testament. For George Panikulam, the Collection had two closely interwoven goals: to provide aid for Jerusalem and to establish solidarity between Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>76</sup> Then he discussed some of the key theological words employed by Paul concerning the Collection. Panikulam highlighted both χάρις and διακονία. Most of what the Collection is in Panikulam's

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<sup>74</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 87.

<sup>75</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Panikulam, 35.

eyes is an expression of grace in loving and self-giving service to others for Christ.<sup>77</sup> The Macedonian generosity was only possible because of the grace of God.<sup>78</sup> Indeed it is this very complex combination of love, grace, and service in the Collection that builds and accomplishes Christian *κοινωνία*. This *κοινωνία* is the “actuation of the community” here as a vibrant “expression of a Christian community growing towards God.”<sup>79</sup> *Κοινωνία* as sharing through the Collection had an ecumenical purpose, as an instrument of unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Furthermore, it was bound up in a *κοινωνία* with Jesus Christ by cooperating with the grace of God and emulating the giving of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 8:9).<sup>80</sup>

Jouette Bassler’s survey of asking for money in the New Testament entitled God and Mammon: explored the origins of the Collection in the Jerusalem Council (for Bassler Acts 15 equals Galatians 2). The desire of Paul to remember the poor was an act of charity, but even more an act of solidarity between Jewish and Gentile believers.<sup>81</sup> Bassler then followed Georgi in the Evolutionary Approach to a degree by pointing out that the greatest significance of the Collection as an act of solidarity only came about after the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch (which took place after the Jerusalem Council). After this threatening event, the Collection was intended to restore the break in *κοινωνία* between the two branches of the church.<sup>82</sup> Further, with the rocky history of Paul and Corinth, the Collection took on additional significance as a demonstration of the Corinthians’ loyalty to Paul and as a demonstration of genuine Christian love.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Panikulam, 39-42. Panikulam’s very insightful discussion of the cycle of grace will be incorporated into the next chapter.

<sup>78</sup> Panikulam, 53.

<sup>79</sup> Panikulam, 56.

<sup>80</sup> Panikulam, 57.

<sup>81</sup> Bassler, 93. “Solidarity” is an important term in Bassler’s discussion of the Collection.

<sup>82</sup> Bassler, 96.

<sup>83</sup> Bassler, 100.

Bassler also devoted space to the central role of grace coming from God through the Corinthians to the Jerusalem church. The voluntary giving that must be inherent in the Collection for it to express authentic Christian *κοινωνία* is dependent upon a prior giving of self over to the will of God.<sup>84</sup> Bassler noted two key expansions in the meaning of the Collection. It moves from charity to a deep statement of solidarity and from an act of service to an act of worship.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately though, the Collection was an act and sign of grace meant to further an ecumenical vision.<sup>86</sup>

### Summary

This chapter has surveyed five major interpretive approaches to the Collection. Often these have been interwoven, but they still reveal the perspectives of interpreters in fundamental ways. The Eschatological Approach employed Romans 9-11 as the paradigm of Pauline missiological eschatology and saw the Collection as having its ultimate significance as an outworking of Paul's missiological expectations. The Hellenistic approach saw the Collection primarily through the lens of Hellenistic financial and administrative dealings. The Evolutionary Approach claimed several rises and falls of the Collection project with a number of differences and changes in Paul's intent and motives. The Economic Approach primarily looked to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as the most thorough and indicative description of the Collection, emphasizing the economic and grace aspects of that discussion. Finally, the Ecumenical Approach which is part of almost all of the above see the Collection as having its primary end in reunifying the alienated Jewish and Gentile branches of Christianity through this generous gift.

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<sup>84</sup> Bassler, 104. Note how the theological argument of Paul is focused by Bassler on the requirements for an authentic sign of solidarity.

<sup>85</sup> Bassler, 111-12.

<sup>86</sup> Bassler, 11-13.

## Chapter 3: The Exegetical Analysis of the Collection Texts

### Consideration of Possible Texts

#### Chronology and Criticism

It is not the within the purpose of this paper to execute a thorough argument on issues of chronology and criticism. However, there are two strategic areas that definitely affect the interpretation of the texts and the understanding of Paul's ministry: the chronology of Paul's travels and letters, and the integrity of 2 Corinthians.

First, regarding chronology, this study adopted the chronology of Paul's life and letters as presented in Ben Witherington's recent commentary on Acts.<sup>1</sup> An adaptation of this chronology can be seen in the appendix. A few points are essential to the following exegetical study.<sup>2</sup> First, Paul did make three visits to Jerusalem (cf. Acts). The initial visit came three years after his conversion (Acts 9:23-25, Galatians 1:18-20). The second was the "famine relief visit." This visit is proleptically mentioned in Acts 11:27-30, but the historical event is mentioned in Acts 12:25 (after the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44). This is visit that should be identified with the one recounted in Galatians 2:1-10 for many reasons: (1) Galatians 2:10 makes sense within a famine relief visit. (2) Galatians makes no mention of the decree of Acts 15 (which would have added a great deal to Paul's argument). (3) The issue in Galatians 2 is circumcision, not table fellowship as in Acts 15. (4) Galatians 2 describes a private meeting while Acts 15 portrays a large public meeting. (5) In Galatians 2 Paul goes up because of a personal revelation, while in Acts 15 he and Barnabas were appointed to go because of an open

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Witherington III, The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 82-85.

<sup>2</sup> These points are crucial, for in some instances it will be the decisions on chronology that affirm or deny some of the possible interpretive approaches described in Chapter 2.

controversy.<sup>3</sup> Paul's third visit was to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. This also means that Galatians was written before the Council and that the incident with Peter and the Judaizers at Antioch also took place before the Council.<sup>4</sup>

This study will proceed from the dating as follows: Galatians written in early 49, the Jerusalem Council occurred in late 49, 1 Corinthians was written in 54 (or early 55) from Ephesus, a lost "tearful" letter was written later in 55 after the painful visit to Corinth, 2 Corinthians 1-9 was written in early 56 from Macedonia, 2 Corinthians 10-13 was written on the way to Corinth after Paul received bad news later in 56, Romans was written from Corinth in very late 56 or early 57. The complete condensed chronology of the relevant portions of Paul's life is given in the appendix.

The next question that must be answered concerns the integrity or partitions of 2 Corinthians. This study will take the position put forward by Victor Furnish in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, that 2 Corinthians 1-9 is one letter. 2:14-7:4 is certainly a break in the flow, but not severe enough to constitute a separate letter.<sup>5</sup> Paul's confident laud of the Corinthians in ch. 7 prepares for and leads into the material in ch. 8.<sup>6</sup> Furnish admits that the case for the unity of chapter 9 with chapters 1-8 is more questionable. However, he points out that the redundancy of the two chapters is more alleged than real, for 9:3-5 needs the end of ch. 8 to be understandable, 9:1-5 makes sense as an extension of 8:16-24 (especially with the hook reference to boasting), and 9:6-15 forms an appropriate conclusion to both

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<sup>3</sup> Witherington, Acts, 92-94. He cites several arguments concerning this identification which are convincing as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> See Witherington, Acts, 86-97 for a full and integrated discussion of these dates and relations. Witherington's arguments are accepted for this study. However, his construction from the data immediately disintegrates many of the presuppositions and conclusions of Nickle and Georgi who rely on a different chronology, especially regarding the three visits, the relation of Acts and Galatians, and the dating of Galatians 2:11-14.

<sup>5</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 35.

<sup>6</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 36.



chapters.<sup>7</sup> In addition to these, Stanley Stowers has thoroughly debunked Betz's (and others') argument that  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \mu\grave{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\grave{\alpha}\rho$  in 9:1 must be taken as the beginning of a new letter. After studying ninety Greek examples, he said, "In no example does the expression introduce the body of a document or even come near its beginning."<sup>8</sup> Stowers shows (with ancient examples) how this phrase functions to introduce a warrant or reason for the preceding exhortation in 8:24.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this objective evidence shows that Furnish's breakdown (which grouped 8:16-9:5 together) is largely correct.

Finally, also with Furnish, this study will take the position that 2 Corinthians 10-13 represents a later letter responding to trouble at Corinth. 2 Corinthians 10-13 should not be identified with the "tearful" letter of 2:4, because the tone of does not fit with Paul's description of that letter of anguish. Also, 2 Corinthians 12:18, most probably refers to the Collection visit made by Titus (and other brothers) that is first mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, 2 Corinthians 10-13 was probably written from Macedonia after Paul received troubling news from Titus.

#### Accepted Texts

Many of the key texts regarding the Collection have already been noted in the course of Chapters 1 and 2. I will simply highlight those texts here in the order that they will be examined in this exegetical phase. The exegesis will follow a chronological order of the Pauline letters which discuss the Collection.

Galatians 2:10. Taking the early date for Galatians (see above), this is the earliest of Paul's letters and contains an incipient mention of the Collection. Paul probably did not have the fully developed Collection in mind at this early point, but he revealed here the attitudes and issues that would give birth to the Collection. The

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<sup>7</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 432-33.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley K. Stowers, "Peri Men Gar and the Integrity of 2 Cor. 8 and 9," Novum Testamentum 32 (1990), 341.

<sup>9</sup> Stowers, 346.

<sup>10</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 38-41.

statement is brief but crucial for determining what the origin of the project was for Paul and how it related to the Jerusalem church.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4. This is only somewhat longer than the Galatians text and deals primarily with logistical matters in the Collection and delivery of the money. Nonetheless, it can and should be examined as one step along in the process of the Collection both in Paul's understanding and execution of it.

2 Corinthians 8-9. This is the most extensive and sustained discussion of the Collection in the Pauline corpus, and thus it is paramount to our analysis and final synthesis. These two chapters will be treated as part of the whole letter of 2 Corinthians 1-9 as set forth above. The bulk of the exegesis will focus on these two chapters.

Romans 15:22-33. We consider Romans as the latest of the authentic Pauline letters (this study takes the Pastorals as deutero-Pauline). Chapter 15 of this letter is perhaps the final extant comment by Paul on his own ministry. This will reveal the mind of Paul on the eve of his final (delivery) visit to Jerusalem from Corinth. As such it will provide a closing perspective on the Collection project as a whole, and must be seen within the context of the entire epistle.

The chronological sequence of these letters follows the order given above and the discussion earlier under chronology.

### Disputed Texts

The pertinence and acceptance of the above texts is relatively obvious. However, other interpreters have made suggestions regarding other texts that should be examined as directly relevant to the Collection.

Larry Hurtado has argued that all of Galatians 2:1-10 and Galatians 6:6-10 should be read as an apologetic and exhortation for the Collection.<sup>11</sup> Hurtado insisted the Collection must be strongly defended by Paul to the Gentile believers in Galatia so that Paul can exhort them to participate in it.<sup>12</sup> But, if this is so, then Paul

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<sup>11</sup> Larry Hurtado, "The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 5 (1979): 46.

<sup>12</sup> Hurtado, 52.

has incredibly downplayed any such defense or exhortation. The statement in 2:10 is not an integral part of Paul's defense or appeal, but rather a continuation of the agreeing spirit commented on in 2:9. Furthermore, the exhortations in 6:1-10 make much more sense as *intra*-church issues rather than *inter*-church issues.<sup>13</sup>

The next disputed text regards Georgi's intention to take "Philippians 4:10-20 as an exegetical model for the further interpretation of all Pauline literature pertaining to the collection."<sup>14</sup> This does not seem to surface explicitly in Georgi's later exegetical and theological work, but it may very well be there implicitly. For the purpose of this study, Philippians 4:10-20 will not be considered as a text which specifically concerns the Collection. This is because the finances discussed there are explicitly personal gifts of aid to Paul (cf. 4:15-16), and furthermore this sharing of the Philippian congregation is counted as unique (note the end of 4:15). However, Georgi was right in seeing some relevance in this text, particularly as the language and ideas correlate to Romans 15:22-33. The Philippians passage will add some help to interpreting that text.

Finally, one must mention a frequent observation of interpreters: Luke's silence (or ignorance) concerning the Collection. The best possibility of a reconciled chronology (between Acts and Paul's epistles) was given above, but Luke does not seem to be aware of the Collection. During Paul's journey to Jerusalem (chs. 20-21) and during Paul's actual visit (21-22) no mention is made of money or aid, though the possible companions of the delivery are noted in 20:4. There might be some allusive mention of the money in 24:17 where Paul refers to "alms for my people" and in v. 26 where Felix believes that Paul has access to a considerable sum of money. The reference to "alms" is interesting, but the relative silence of Acts on the Collection prevents us from examining it as truly central to Paul's understanding.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hurtado argued on 53-54 that 6:6-10 is really a set of exhortations to give generously to others at Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> Georgi, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Alan Diehl, The Significance of Almsgiving in Primitive Christianity as a Means of Understanding New Testament Piety, Ph. D. diss, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1992),

Galatians 2:10

All of Galatians 1:13-2:10 appears to be a careful, expanded explanation of Paul's claims in 1:11-12 that the gospel proclaimed by Paul is not in any way of human origin, but came as a revelation from Christ. This is punctuated again in 1:16-17, 1:18-20, and 2:6. Paul asserted that even though he has a connection to Jerusalem, that connection is not one of dependence or origin for his preaching. Yet Paul simultaneously stressed independence and mutuality. The Jerusalem leaders add nothing to Paul's gospel (2:6) and it is really the "false brothers" who stir up the issue of Gentile circumcision (2:4) which actually comes to naught as the leaders affirm Paul's message and mission (2:7). Then, although it was Paul who had originally breached the issue (2:1-2), the Jerusalem leaders are portrayed as taking the initiative to welcome and affirm Paul by extending their hand of *κοινωνία* to Paul and Barnabas. This occurs because they recognize (*ιδόντες*) the grace (that is the activity of God) given to Paul. This resulted in two concurrent mission efforts to the Jews and to the Gentiles, apparently both on equal footing in Paul's understanding. However, the division of the missions may have signaled some uncertainties that would erupt later (2:11-14).

After laying down this context, we can now turn to a fuller examination of 2:10. First, it should be noted that 2:7 begins a major contrast (*ἀλλὰ*) with the immediately preceding verses in 2:1-6, which propounded Paul's authentic independence from Jerusalem. 2:7-10 then presents the points of agreement and fellowship between the Antioch and Jerusalem bodies, more specifically between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders. There are four points of acknowledged similarity. First is that both groups have a faithful message and mission (2:7). The second is that God's empowering and approving grace was present with both groups (2:9a). The third is the reality of family fellowship (2:9b). And, the fourth is concern for the poor. Therefore the statement in 2:10 is not a requirements from Jerusalem on Paul. On the contrary, it is a final statement of continuity and agreement between the two

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103-107. Diehl likewise dismisses this a crucial text applying to the Collection. However, his conclusion that it refers to the Nazirite payment is equally debatable.

groups in balance to the mutual independence stressed in 2:1-6. What the Jerusalem leaders requested was precisely what Paul had done (since Galatians 2 represents the famine relief visit) and was still eager to do.

In most cases *μόνον* (which begins 2:10) points to an added exception to the previous statement, as it is similarly employed in Gal. 1:23 and 1 Cor. 7:39. The rising question then is to discover what type of exception this is to the previous points of agreement in 2:7-9. Is it a requirement made upon Paul? Given the above context of 2:7-10 stressing mutual agreements this seems unlikely. In addition Paul seems relatively detached from the actually delivery process (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4) which would make no sense if this is a condition laid upon Paul himself by the Jerusalem leaders. In addition, it is illegitimate to view this as strongly analogous to the required Temple Tax upon Diaspora Jews which is now laid upon Paul and the Gentile churches.<sup>16</sup> What type of exception is it then? If 2:7-10 is focused on expressing agreement and continuity in principle for two concurrent missions, then 2:10 displays the concrete issue that is the bond between the separate mission efforts. The end of 2:9 (as well as 2:7) clearly portrays two completely distinctive and non-overlapping missions. What then is the lynch pin that binds this whole Christian movement together? What is the exception to the separate missions? The first connection is in the grace of God that is mutually recognized and affirmed for both branches of the mission (2:8-9). The second connection is the ongoing remembrance and generosity to the needy (which in this setting is concentrated in the Jewish part of the church). The Jerusalem leaders are not laying down a condition or exception to their affirmation of Paul (if they did 2:6 would be a highly disingenuous comment). What they are laying down an exception to is the complete

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<sup>16</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia,: Fortress Press, 1979), 103. Here Betz fully deflates any such analogy especially as supposed by Nickle.

bifurcation of the two branches of the church into Jewish and Gentile; they are seeking a unifying bond between the two in Christian charity.<sup>17</sup>

It should be said that it is possible that this request made in 2:10 was understood differently by Paul and the Jerusalem leaders. The leaders may have seen it as an obligation laid upon Paul to ensure that the Gentile mission would somehow not drift away from its roots in and responsibility to the Jerusalem. However, Paul was adamant that the Jerusalem leaders “added nothing” to him (2:6). Paul certainly would not have viewed such an obligation as a coercive demand, for it was indeed one of the very things which he was already willing and eager to do (as v. 10 made clear). This remembrance of the poor was simply a confirmation of what Paul had already intended to do, and thus consisted of no addition to him from Jerusalem.

The rest of the first part of 2:10 is a *ἵνα* clause, which can best be labeled a direct object or content clause.<sup>18</sup> The first part of the verse clearly has some type of ellipsis which may be filled in as “They only requested that we continue remembering the poor.” (The verb for “requested” is missing in the ellipsis.) Thus, the *ἵνα* clause gives the content of that request (not a command). The verb here is the present subjunctive of *μνημονεύω* “to remember.” In this case the present tense points to the ongoing nature of this activity (which had already begun in the initial gift delivered at this famine visit) to aid to poor.<sup>19</sup> The best Pauline parallel to this ongoing type of concern is in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 where Paul is not just recalling the Thessalonians but displaying a disposition which moves him to love and help them (see 2: 9, 17ff.)

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<sup>17</sup> Note that this conclusions seems to closely align the Jewish leadership and Paul with the Ecumenical approach, for the Collection is an attempt to maintain some connection between the Jewish and Gentile branches of the church.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 475. He also cites 1 Cor. 1:10 as another example. But my assessment disagrees with his, that 2:10 should be an imperatival clause on 477.

<sup>19</sup> This ongoing service to the poor is supported by Betz, *Galatians*, 101-102.

The term “the poor” ὁ πτωχός has received much attention from scholars since Karl Holl identified this term as the pious self-designation of the Jerusalem church.<sup>20</sup> However, it seems that Leander Keck has definitively defeated that position with regard to the references in the Pauline writing. He pointed out that in Rom. 15:26 εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ “of the saints” should be taken as a partitive (not an appositional) genitive. Thus “the poor” constituted an group within the Jerusalem church and not the church itself.<sup>21</sup> On the positive side, Keck showed that Jerusalem was in a state of real economic need (lack, ὑστέρημα cf. 2 Cor. 8:14), and thus the economic denotation of “poor” is clearly justified.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the last half of Galatians 2:10 reaffirms that this statement should be understood as an expression of the continuity between Paul and Jerusalem due to the almost redundant αὐτὸ τοῦτο “the very same thing.” What is most interesting here is the lexical and attitudinal connection between this brief statement and 2 Corinthians 8-9. Notice that Paul was “zealous” to do this (aorist of σπουδάζω). This not only points to Paul’s prior eager commitment to this very thing, seen in the famine relief visit and thus in full agreement with the Jerusalem leadership. But, it is also significant given the stress on the importance of zealous/eagerness in 2 Corinthians where cognates of this verb appear in 7: 11, 12; 8: 7, 8, 16, 17, 22. Paul expected this same eagerness for giving to be manifested in his congregations who gave to the needy. Note also the importance of doing (ποιέω) seen here in 2:10 and in 2 Corinthians 8:10-11. These same attitudinal and behavioral aspects of Paul

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<sup>20</sup> Karl Holl, “Ker Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem Urgemeinde,” in Gessamelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1928), 46-67.

<sup>21</sup> Leander E. Keck, “The Poor Among the Saint in the New Testament,” Zeitschrift für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 56 (1965), 119.

<sup>22</sup> See this and other arguments by Keck, 120-122. The only possible objection would be that Paul shifts the connotation of this term by the time of Romans 15, but such a change seems unlikely and has no explicit indicators.

toward the poor are later exhorted to the Corinthians. There is an obvious connection here.

In conclusion, we have seen how Paul desired to display the independence of his ministry and message in Galatians, but that 2:7-10 emphasizes the continuity between Paul and Jerusalem. Also, 2:10 is an exception to the dual mission of the church, as a means to keeping the two growing edges joined by charitable giving to the needy. Finally, one disclaimer: even though 2:10 shows some dramatic connections to the thought and issue of the fully developed Collection, it is best to see the ideas and actions here as an incipient stimulus to what would later become the Great Collection.<sup>23</sup> What Paul presented here were the attitudes and issues that would later give birth to the Collection. Paul was not speaking directly about the Collection in 2:10, but these early statements connect with the Collection project. This is an initial step on the journey to the full meaning and intention of the Collection, a step which reveals much continuity with Paul's later exposition. Because of this strong continuity and its early place, Galatians 2:10 is vital to understanding the Collection

#### 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

The next text on the Collection is very terse and pragmatic. After his moving expositional defense of the reality of the resurrection in chapter 15 Paul closed 1 Corinthians with some final logistical matters.<sup>24</sup>

16:1 begins with the fifth  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$   $\delta\epsilon$  in 1 Corinthians which may suggest that Paul is once again addressing issues raised in the letter from the Corinthians.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Paul only employed the term  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$  for the Collection in this passage,

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<sup>23</sup> Dunn, Theology, 706.

<sup>24</sup> Georgi may be right that there is some connection between ch. 15 and 16:1-4 on the basis of Paul's emphasis on the historical reality of the faith, but any such connection would be highly implicit. See Georgi, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 811.



and so it may have been the specific term employed in the Corinthian's letter to him.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere Paul employed a much more theological vocabulary for the Collection, but this term pointed particularly to the monetary nature of the effort.<sup>27</sup> (Perhaps Paul later intentionally shifted this to εὐλογία to deepen the meaning of the Collection. See 2 Corinthians 9:5ff.) Verse 1 also demonstrates that the Galatian churches have (thus far) gladly participated in the beginnings of the Collection project, and that the Corinthians can follow the same procedure Paul instructed there.

Paul set forth a simple habit to help the Collection flow with greater ease. On the first day of the week each person was to set aside (note the singular verbs, both τιθέτω and θησουρίζων) from whatever financial profits they had in the past week, profits granted from God.<sup>28</sup> Each one is instructed to give to the Collection out of the profits of the week. This exhortation went out to all the economic levels of the community, deepening the fellowship in the community and fostering fuller solidarity with the needy in Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> This process was to prevent any sudden collections when Paul arrives. Perhaps we have here a mild premonition to Paul's fear that any such last minute collections may denigrate the true character of the gift and turn it into an extortion (2 Corinthians 9:5).

Verses 1-2 addressed the Corinthians role and responsibility in the Collection, while verses 3-4 shift to Paul's role and responsibility. Paul made another reference to his upcoming visit to Corinth (see also 4:18-21). This comment is much more cooperative and conciliar in tone as it anticipates the readiness of the Corinthians not only with the collected money but also with emissaries who will carry the gift to Jerusalem. These emissaries would be approved (δοκιμάζω) by the congregation as

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<sup>26</sup> Fee, 811-12.

<sup>27</sup> Gerhard Kittel, "λογία," *TDNT*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey R. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 282. He points out that usually this term refers to a special collection of funds.

<sup>28</sup> Fee, 814.

<sup>29</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community*, 315.

a whole and further attested to by Paul's own letters of recommendation.<sup>30</sup> It is true that the main verb πέμψω "I will send" indicates that the Collection is ultimately Paul's project.<sup>31</sup> However, verses 3-4 simultaneously place some distance between Paul and the Collection. It is not of paramount importance for Paul to deliver the Collection personally, since the appointed representatives would. To be sure, these appointed representatives played a vital role in relationships in the ancient world, as they truly embodied the senders and carried greeting to bind the two groups together.<sup>32</sup> But the fact that Paul was entirely comfortable with these emissaries points to a stage where he was not so concerned about the reception of the Collection in Jerusalem. It is only if it seems advisable or fitting (ἄξιός, see BAG 1.c.) to the situation will Paul go. Paul commented on real concerns that he had about the reception of the Collection in Romans 15:30-31, but he has no such concerns here.<sup>33</sup>

There is a brief hint here at the theological significance of the Collection that Paul would later expand upon. It is the designation of the Collection as χάρις. In this immediate context, the term simply would have been understood as a "gift." But later Paul would spin out from this term much of the import of the Collection in 2 Corinthians 8-9. In summary, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 is a more pragmatic statement about the actual process of the Collection. This probably arose as a direct question from the Corinthians which shows their initial eagerness for the project. It is the practical and monetary aspects that are most prominent in these comments, with some hints to the larger significance. Last, Paul was not anxious about the reception of the Collection at this juncture. He deemed it appropriate to send

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<sup>30</sup> These letters are certainly important for identification and recommendation to the Jerusalem church from Paul. Witherington, Conflict and Community, 315.

<sup>31</sup> Fee, 815 n. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Fee, 815.

<sup>33</sup> Remember that this letter was written in 54/55 after Paul had been gone on the "third" missionary journey for some time.

appointed representatives while his personal involvement is based on what seems most fitting at the time.

### 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

Given the intensiveness and extensiveness of these two chapters, they must form the cornerstone of any investigation into the Collection. This study will move through the coherent blocks of material in these two chapters and then draw some conclusions.

#### 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

As presented above, this study takes the position that 2 Corinthians 1-9 constitutes a single letter. Thus it is important to see how chapter 7 prepares for and leads into chapters 8 and 9. Commentators have frequently recognized a return in 7:5 to the travel plans first mentioned in 2:13. Then in 7:5-16 Paul spoke about his renewed joy and confidence at the return of Titus. There are several lexical connections between ch.7 and chs. 8-9 such as παρακαλέω/παράκλησις (7:4, 6, 7, 13; 8:4, 6, 13; 9:5), Titus (7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23), ζῆλος (7:7, 11; 9:2), σπουδή (7:11, 12; 8:7, 8, 16), καύχησις (and cognates, 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2, 3). In addition to these connections there is a more substantial relation between the three chapters. 2 Corinthians 1-9, while not as striking as 10-13, definitely reveals an element of alienation between Paul and the Corinthians. Thus Titus' return was greatly comforting to Paul because he told Paul of their repentance and renewed zeal and longing for him. Titus had delivered 2 Corinthians 1-9 to the Church at Corinth. In this letter Paul had given an extended defense of the authenticity of his apostolic mission in ch. 1-6.<sup>34</sup> After this, Paul shared his joy at the repentance of the Corinthians and asked them to renew their zeal for the Collection (ch. 7 and chs. 8-9 respectively).<sup>35</sup> This letter was an attempt to heal a minor breach in relationship and then moved on to the important matters concerning the Collection.

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<sup>34</sup> Witherington, Conflict and Community, 371-375.

<sup>35</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 398, and Witherington, Conflict and Community, 412-13.

2 Corinthians 8:1-8. 8:1-5 is almost universally recognized as an example employed by Paul to urge the Corinthians on to generous giving.<sup>36</sup> The introduction to this section begins with a standard “informing formula, Γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί (see also 1 Cor. 15:1, Gal. 1:11), which Paul employed to introduce or remind the audience of some crucial facts for the following discussion.<sup>37</sup> After this in v.6 Paul explained the consequential action he took to send Titus to further the Collection project among the Corinthians. In v. 7 Paul made a sensitive exhortation to urge the Corinthians to generous giving. Verse 8 provides a closing (and almost parenthetical) explanation from Paul explaining why he was urging the Corinthians in this way.<sup>38</sup> This analysis is central to the interpretation of this section.

While it is true that this presentation of the generosity of the Macedonians certainly has the implicit effect of encouraging and challenging the Corinthians to generous giving, there is an important discontinuity. The Macedonians were commended for their generous giving in the midst of their affliction of poverty (the later βάθους πτωχείᾳ is expegetical of θλίψις). That is, they gave (apparently a substantial amount) even though they themselves were in hard financial straights. This is notably different from what Paul presented to the Corinthians in 8:12-14. There Paul does not want the giving of one community to induce an imbalance that simply transfers the desperate need from one place to another, but he sought an equality that would supply for the needs of all.<sup>39</sup> However, note that the *explicit* effect of the Macedonians’ giving is on Paul himself. It is their example that caused

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<sup>36</sup> Betz labeled this an *exemplum*, 2 Corinthians, 41. Witherington called it a *synkrisis* (comparison), Conflict and Community, 412.

<sup>37</sup> This may well point to an exordium-like function, cf. Betz, 2 Corinthians, 41.

<sup>38</sup> Note how this breakdown and analysis differs from Betz, 2 Corinthians, 41 ff. and Martin, 249. None of the commentator consulted referred to v. 8 as an explanatory parenthesis, for they usually view it as part of the appeal in v. 7 (Betz, 2 Corinthians) or part of the arguments in v. 9ff (Furnish, II Corinthians, 403).

<sup>39</sup> Paul could be speaking with his tongue in his cheek or in terms of a concession to the Corinthians, but this is not warranted by the tenor of 8:9-15. The Macedonians seem to exceed the financial norm.

him to send Titus to complete the Collection among the Corinthians in v. 6 (note the articular infinitive of result, εἰς τὸ plus the infinitive). Furthermore, verse 8 was intended to give some explanation as to why Paul was exhorting the Corinthians in this way. He did not issue a command, because of the loving zeal and earnestness of the communities that he desired to affirm. The Macedonians formed the standard of loving zeal in Paul's mind (not a standard for financial contribution); again, the primary effect was on Paul while the Macedonians still function secondarily as an example to be emulated (but a better example will follow in v. 9). The example of the Macedonians reminded Paul that such gracious giving is a key aspect of genuine spiritual maturity and so he sought to urge the Corinthians to the same maturity. Before examining verses 6-8, we will first pause to explore 1-5 in greater detail.

What Paul wanted to “make known” was not so much the generosity of the Macedonians but God's grace, the activity of God working the lives of the Macedonians. Grace (χάρις) is a powerful and frequent word in these two chapters (8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 19; 9:8, 14, 15). Since a theological synthesis of the meaning of this word in this context will come in the conclusion to this study, it is important to note its uses and implications with each occurrence. In this instance it referred to God's activity in empowering the churches of the Macedonians to give with sincerity and generosity. Thus, even though the churches were facing severe affliction because of their own poverty, their abundant joy (again a gift from God) overflowed (περισσεύω, another key term in these two chapters) into a wealth of generosity (τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος). This phrase is probably epexegetical as well; their wealth is their generosity, an idea Paul will repeat below in 8:12.<sup>40</sup> The term ἀπλότης in the Hellenistic world referred to the folk ideal of simplicity and generosity.<sup>41</sup> This term was adapted into the ethics of Hellenistic Judaism, especially as seen in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.<sup>42</sup> In many references ἀπλότης

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<sup>40</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 400.

<sup>41</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 44.

<sup>42</sup> I am indebted to C. K. Barrett's commentary on 2 Corinthians for these references, 219-220.

can be translated as “integrity” and connoted a single and whole focus of the heart upon obedience (see T.Sim. 4:5, T.Lev. 13:1). Even more importantly, in the Testament of Issachar chs. 4-5 this “integrity” was closely linked to a lack of worldly greed and a willingness to care for the needy out of compassion (see 4:1,5 and especially 5:1-2). Paul connected ἀπλότης with giving in Romans 12:8. There as here, it probably refers to an integrity which motivates one to care sincerely and generously for others out of grateful obedience to God.

In verse 3 Paul testified to his own personal experience of this unusual generosity from the Macedonians. Verse 3 begins with a ὅτι just like verse 2, and both verses seem to give more precise details to the activity of God’s grace among the Macedonians. Verse 3 contains an interesting ellipsis, which can be translated: “I testify that they voluntarily gave according to their ability and even beyond their ability.” However, no Greek verb stands behind the English verb “gave” in this translation. It seems Paul desired to emphasize the internal motivation to give, expressed by the term αὐθαίρετοι, “voluntarily” or “willingly” (used again only in 8:17 of Titus).

This description was extended into verses 4-5. Verse 4 shows that in this case it was the donors begging (δεόμαι) to give instead the recipients begging to receive!<sup>43</sup> Again in v. 4 χάρις appears, standing a synonym for the Collection itself (as in I Corinthians 16:3). This gift was not a general donation, but a specific donation that the Macedonians longed to share (κοινωνία) in service (διακονία) to the saints. It was brotherly love between Christians that drove the Macedonians to share in this Collection. This sharing was part of what built the bonds of the unity across the church from Gentile to Jew, and the concept of service was central to Paul’s understanding of the Collection. Service (διακονία) is Paul’s word for tasks

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<sup>43</sup> A fascinating parallel to this occurs in “The Testament of Job” 11:1-4. where some persons approach Job and beg him to lend them money so that they might go and do service for the poor.

ordained by God in order to help others, especially within the body of Christ (see 1 Cor, 12:4-11).<sup>44</sup>

Verse 5 climaxes the paragraph and is the most moving part of the Macedonians commendable lives. The actions of the Macedonians narrated in v. 5 stirred Paul to action, and it is the giving of self described in v. 5 that Paul hoped the Corinthians would emulate. The Macedonians exceeded Paul's expectations by first giving themselves to God. The phrase which combines δίδωμι and ἑαυτοὺς usually referred to the self-giving of Christ, but here the Macedonians exhibited that same quality, possibly as a prelude to the Christological example in 8:9.<sup>45</sup> For Paul this prior giving of oneself to God is the prerequisite to any authentic Christian giving, and "thus a gesture of economic relief was made an act of Christian devotion."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the urge to give so generously arose from the very depths of their being as Christians.<sup>47</sup> This giving of oneself to God did not end in a mystical experience, but it followed through by also obediently heeding God's chosen leaders. Thus, the Macedonians gave themselves to Paul's direction according to God's will. Betz noted a theological substructure here: the Macedonians give themselves to God in gratitude, then they offer themselves to practical aid for needy persons through God's chosen agent.<sup>48</sup>

Verse 6 gives the immediate effect of the Macedonians graciousness upon Paul himself. It reminded and encouraged him to urge (παρακαλέω) Titus to go to the Corinthians for the express purpose of finishing the work on the Collection that Titus had previously begun among them. (The idea of completing ἐπιτελέω the

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<sup>44</sup> All of this is contra Betz, 2 Corinthians, 46, who claimed that grace and service here were administrative terms without religious significance. However, if that were true, this would be the only probable place in all of the Pauline corpus where these words are devoid of theological meaning.

<sup>45</sup> Panikulam, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Barrett, 220.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 48, but even here Betz attributes this to a general ancient religious concept of giving oneself back to God in gratitude for God's gifts.

Collection will resurface in 8:9-15.)<sup>49</sup> In this instance the Collection is again referred to as χάρις. This probably simply denotes the Collection as a gift, but it also certainly carries connotations of the grace of God active among the Macedonians which enabled them to give in the way that they did, delivering themselves over to God first, who then formed a truly giving spirit in them.

Verse 7 then gives the substance of what Paul wanted the Corinthians to do. He complemented the Corinthians for already excelling (περισσεύω) in various other gifts such as πίστις, λόγος, γνώσις, σπουδή, and Paul's ἀγάπη for them.<sup>50</sup> From 1 Corinthians we know that the Corinthians considered themselves (even as Paul considered them) a very gifted congregation. Their gifts were overflowing, and Paul held them in the dearest love. But they were lacking something very vital -- sincere and surrendered giving to the Collection. This generous, voluntary, loving giving which flows out of a full giving of oneself to God and a resulting trust in God's agent is one important thing that the Corinthians lacked. Such giving would be the culmination of spiritual growth, and Paul urged them to excel in this as well in proportion to their other gifts.<sup>51</sup> Here is where the emulation of the Macedonians is most prominent, just as they gave themselves and overflowed (see vv. 5, 2), so the Corinthians were to give themselves so that they could overflow in the same way. Once again χάρις is employed to denote the Collection, but as has been discussed, Paul is looking beyond a mere monetary donation to a full surrender of the congregation as a whole to God which would open the way for God to open their hearts in loving generosity. Bassler was very insightful when she pointed out the sacramental nature of the Collection. The Collection becomes a visible sign of this

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<sup>49</sup> Again this is a content ἵνα clause that gives the substance of what Paul urged Titus to do. See Wallace, 475.

<sup>50</sup> The ἀλλὰ is intensive (cf. BAG v. 6.) and not adversative for verse 7 is an affirmation with exhortation, not an exception.

<sup>51</sup> Bassler, 103. This is an imperatival ἵνα clause, cf. Furnish, II Corinthians, 403.



invisible grace at work among the Corinthians, just as it was at work among the Macedonians.<sup>52</sup>

The closure to this example from the Macedonians and the resulting actions by Paul comes in verse 8. Paul stepped back and stressed that this is not a command (ἐπιταγή) that he was issuing to the Corinthians, for that might obscure the real goal of authentic self-giving on the part of the Corinthians. On the contrary (now an adversative ἀλλὰ), Paul simply wanted to prove the love of the Corinthians by means of (διὰ with the genitive) the zeal that he had seen in the Macedonians.<sup>53</sup> Verse 8 definitely closes what comes before and gives a final explanation of why Paul was urging the Corinthians to give in this way at this particular time. However, verse 8 also moves one into 9:9-15, where Paul began to give several proofs concerning why the Corinthians should act and overflow in this grace of giving.

2 Corinthians 8:9-15. Betz was correct in asserting that 8:9-15 consists of deliberative argument from Paul expressing several reasons for the Corinthians to give in this way.<sup>54</sup> These are all introduced by the γὰρ in v. 9. Paul began with what the Corinthians already knew (γινώσκετε) but perhaps had not reflected upon with regard to the Collection: the example of Christ. A great deal of debate has raged over the Christological implications of v. 9, but that is not the concern of this study. Rather, we will seek to see how this Christological statement (possibly a hymn fragment) functioned in Paul's argument for Christian giving.

The action of Christ is initially entitled grace (χάρις). "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" was what the Corinthians already knew. What then is the content or meaning of this grace? It seems to have three major parts (all included in a ὅτι clause): the object, the sacrifice, and the purpose. The object is placed first probably for emphasis. All that Christ graciously did was δι' ὑμῶς, "for your sake". Christ sacrificed himself for humanity; they were the object of his actions. More pertinent to the immediate context, the gracious action of Christ was intended for and aimed

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<sup>52</sup> Bassler, 105.

<sup>53</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 404

<sup>54</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 60.

at meeting the needs of others who could not help themselves, and it is precisely this love of others that Paul hoped would urge the Corinthians to give. The sacrifice is expressed by means of a concessive participle, “although he was (ὢν) rich,” and an ingressive aorist “he *became* poor (ἐπτώχευσεν).” Christ gave up prerogatives and status in order to come to the aid of others, a sacrifice which included even the suffering of crucifixion. So also the Corinthians must give up themselves (first to God) in order to participate genuinely in the Collection. Finally, the purpose of Christ’s action was to reverse the miserable condition of those whom he came to help by means of that self-giving. It is through Christ (and only through Christ) that the Corinthians themselves became rich (probably a metaphor for salvation and its spiritual benefits), which implied their previous spiritual poverty. Again, this gracious Collection was intended to reverse the hardship of others, particularly that of the needy in the church at Jerusalem. Grace in this context points to the object of the action, the sacrifice involved, and the beneficial result. Grace characterizes the total activity of Christ, and so it is an apt synonym for the Collection project.<sup>55</sup> Christ was the ultimate example of full self-giving for the sake of others that the Corinthians were to follow.

The second proof comes in vv. 10-12. Betz (and others) cited this as an example of Paul using the deliberative category of what is “expedient.” In their view, Paul introduced this as his own opinion in the matter at hand (the Collection). He offered a reason for this generous giving (note the γὰρ) which was based upon what is appropriate or fitting (συμφέρω), but it is also clear that this is what was fitting based both on the demand of the situation *and* the example of Christ which he just presented.<sup>56</sup> Thus the deliberative category of “expediency” may operate in some degree here, but Paul has also spoken of what is fitting in light of the example

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<sup>55</sup> For a comparison, one can see how Paul employs Christ as a substantiating example in Philippians 2:5-11 and Romans 15:1-3.

<sup>56</sup> Betz denies any possible theological overtones in this proof, 2 Corinthians, 65. However, Furnish points out that other Pauline uses of this word, while drawing on Aristotle’s category of the “expedient,” are more theologically oriented to what builds up the body of Christ. See 1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23, 12:7, II Corinthians, 405.

of Christ. The Corinthians had already desired (θέλω) and even done (ποιέω, remember the connection to Gal. 2:10) something during the past year (which is indicated in 1 Cor. 16:1-4). Therefore, the fitting thing is that they finish (νυνὶ ἐπιτελέσατε) what they began (προενάρχομαι). (This verse has the one grammatical imperative in all of chapters 8 and 9.) This is the “expedient” or “proper” thing to do. But it is also fitting to follow through on giving in light of Christ’s gracious example. In a sense, Paul saw the hardest part of the battle as already won, for the Corinthians have demonstrated their willingness to give, which is the key element in genuine giving. All that was needed was the follow through on that initial readiness.

Paul went on to show the proper result of finishing such beginnings in 11b. The appropriateness of this is fulfilled when the completion of the giving (according to their means) matches the initial readiness to give (προθυμία τοῦ θέλειν). In stating this, Paul introduced a concept that he had to go on to confirm: giving should be “according to what one has” ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν. This concept of giving “according to one’s means” does have a striking parallel in Aristotle.<sup>57</sup> But even this concept Paul did not leave merely in the realm of cultural wisdom, for he went on to ground it in divine approval and intention in first in v. 12 and further in vv. 13-16.

Verse 12 gives the first justification of this principle of giving according to one’s means by demonstrating its pleasing origins and results. In the protasis of v.12 notice the recurrence of the προ prefix (προθυμία, πρόκειται). This points to the readiness that Paul gladly and attributes to the Corinthians in vv. 10-11 (remembering also his renewed confidence in them from ch. 7). Paul explained that if such prior eagerness was present (which he has affirmed), then the giving within one’s means is pleasing or acceptable, εὐπρόσδεκτος. This word is employed by Paul in Rom. 15:16 and 2 Cor. 6:2 of that which is pleasing to God and in Rom 15:31 of that which is pleasing to human beings. Which are we to understand here,

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<sup>57</sup> Aristotle said, “Liberality should be evaluated on the basis of one’s capital. It is not determined by how much is given but on the basis of the donor’s disposition, which gives in proportion to capital.” Witherington, Conflict and Community, 421 n. 34.

since no object of pleasing is specified? While it is certainly true that the amount of the gift may effect its acceptability in Jerusalem, this implication is downplayed in both 2 Corinthians and Romans. 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 points out that the relief of need in Jerusalem will cause thanksgiving. Two aspects of the Collection cause this thanksgiving: the financial aid that ameliorates the need of the Jerusalem church, and the genuine Christianity evidenced by such giving (9:12-14). Also, in Romans 15:31, it was not external issues such as the amount of the Collection that threatened its acceptability but internal, perhaps nationalistic pressures from unbelievers, that endangered a glad reception. Contributing further to this is the emphasis throughout 8:1-15 on God's gracious activity and the importance of sincere love in giving. This points to the fact that it is most probable (but not fully demonstrable) that Paul intended the theological implication that the gift from the Corinthians would be pleasing to God if they were giving with a right heart even if they were limited by their means.<sup>58</sup>

Paul proceeded to give a further reason for this notion of proportional giving (another γὰρ appears in v. 13 as in v. 12). The Corinthians were perhaps a bit frightened that such generous giving would force them into dire financial straights.<sup>59</sup> Paul stated that it was not a matter of providing respite (ἀνεσις) to one church while engendering poverty (poverty as affliction θλίψις) in another, but rather the whole thing was to be guided by the principle of equality (ἰσότης). Georgi has imputed a depth of meaning into "equality" as a principle that was identified with divine righteousness and stood metonymically for God himself.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Furnish also supported this notion, II Corinthians, 407.

<sup>59</sup> The economic status of the Corinthian church is highly debated. Betz claimed that while Achaia suffered depopulation and widespread poverty, Corinth was a populous and prosperous cosmopolitan center, 2 Corinthians, 52-53. However, Wayne Meeks paints quite a different picture of a lower working class constituting a large part of the Corinthian church (which must have had some wealthier members) who must sacrifice to devote some hard earned money each week to the Collection, The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 108.

<sup>60</sup> Georgi, 88, who draws heavily from Philo's use of the term.

However, commentators have rightly objected to Georgi's conclusion in this instance.<sup>61</sup> What Paul had in mind with this term he explicitly spelled out in v. 14. He envisioned a conduit between the churches through which those with abundance would supply those in need. He reminded the Corinthians that in the present situation (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ)<sup>62</sup> they had more resources than the Jerusalem believers and so the flow should go from abundance to lack. However, this situation might some day be reversed, and the flow would be from Jerusalem to Corinth when the Corinthians would be in dire financial need; all so that an equality of goods and needs might result.<sup>63</sup> Thus this verse denotes a primarily economic concern for the principle of equality.<sup>64</sup>

Paul became even more concrete and moving as he stepped beyond general economic ideas of abundance and lack to the pressing human need of food by quoting Exodus 16:18 in v. 15. In the midst of threatening starvation and a striking lack of faith in Exodus 16, God provided manna from heaven to feed his people. The people had special instructions to gather their food, and the amounts of those who collect much or little were miraculously equalized (16:17-18). Paul shifted the implications in this quotation to emphasize how the supply of manna equaled the need of each in the community (not how the amounts were equalized among those who gathered little or much, which seems to be the original sense of the text). Thus

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<sup>61</sup> For example see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 407-8. He provided a better example from Philo's treatise "Who is the Heir" that showed that Philo also employed this term to refer to proportional giving such as Paul is advocating here.

<sup>62</sup> This phrase can have eschatological overtones as in Romans 8:18, but it can also refer more mundanely to "the present moment" describing a current state of affairs as in Romans 11:5 or 2 Corinthians 6:2. See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 408, contra Martin, 267.

<sup>63</sup> This is one very palpable hint that even though Paul saw the Collection as a one time project, he hoped that the Christian love which drove it would result in future similar relief efforts among the churches.

<sup>64</sup> Note that περίσσευμα "abundance" may be employed with several different connotations, but that ὑστέρημα is generally economic especially in a context such as this (see 1 Cor. 16:7, Php. 2:30, but a different sense for "lack" in Col. 1:24 and 1 Thess. 3:10)

he choose, very appropriately, the verse which demonstrated that each one had enough to meet the need of his family, and no one had too much or too little. This is the anecdotal exemplification of equality (ἰσότης). It is God's will (and His direct action is frequent in the Exodus 16. See vv. 4-5, 8, 10-12, 16) to have equality among His people, so that the needs of all were met and none suffer hunger, despite an original inequality of supply. Paul urged the Corinthians to be God's instrument to balance the present inequality by supplying the vital needs of the Jerusalem saints while still having balance for themselves.

### 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

Two preliminary comments are necessary before a more careful examination of this section. First, the breakdown of Furnish's commentary on 2 Corinthians has been adopted here in light of the adequately demonstrated unity of chs. 8 and 9. The leitmotif that holds this 8:16-9:5 together is the commendation of and the information concerning various representatives who would be visiting Corinth in connection with the Collection. However, there are definitely two sub-units here. In 8:16-23 Paul addressed the specific representatives who were coming in order to administer the Collection, whereas 9:1-5 gives some reasons for the prior visit of these representatives as well as the possible arrival of Macedonians with Paul.<sup>65</sup>

The second preliminary matter concerns the significance of this segment to the Collection project as a whole. Is it mostly (or merely) administrative and devoid of theological meaning? Betz designates this section as the legal designation of officially authorized delegates.<sup>66</sup> Bassler did not comment on 8:16-23 in her discussion of the Collection.<sup>67</sup> These verses substantially deal with administrative issue, but their significance does not end there as will be shown.

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<sup>65</sup> Note that the reference to Achaia in 9:2 does not need to point to a separate letter, but rather keeps the regional designation parallel to Macedonia, as opposed to naming cities.

<sup>66</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 70ff. He insisted that the two additional envoys beyond Titus were forced upon Paul. Nickle claimed that they were Barsabbas and Silas (20), a hypothesis that has not been well received.

<sup>67</sup> A lacunae occurs in that she moves from 8:8-15 to 9:1-5. See 105-106.

2 Corinthians 8:16-23. Paul began this commendation with another reference to χάρις. Here this familiar term is associated in an idiomatic way with “giving thanks” (See 9:15, and note the lexical connection with εὐχαριστέω. Grace is now thanks that is returned to God (this concept will be fully explained in the comments on 9:6-15). For what was Paul giving thanks? It was the zeal (σπουδή) in the heart of Titus for the Corinthians (another link back to ch. 7, particularly vv. 6-7, 13-15). Again the originating action of God is seen in personal relationship, zealousness, and the Collection project as a whole.

Betz cited this zeal as a key qualification in Hellenistic administrative letters.<sup>68</sup> This is accurate, but not so fitting for the case at hand due to the connotations of σπουδή in this context. In the majority of the references provided by Betz this term points to haste, speediness, or efficiency in executing a task. However, the term is employed quite differently with regard to Titus, for the locus of his zeal was his heart (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ) and its object was personal (the Corinthians ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), and not impersonal (oriented to the administrative task of the Collection). Consider also 7:15 where Titus’ “guts” (σπλαγχά) long more and more for the Corinthians. Paul may have been employing a term common to Hellenistic administrative letters, but he has surely revised its meaning for this context. Zeal in this context is not efficiency, but the earnest yearning which characterizes a loving personal relationship placed in the heart by God (τῷ θεῷ τῷ δόντι). Paul also reminded them that his zeal is the same (τὴν αὐτὴν) for the Corinthians. This zeal was apparent to Paul (v. 18) because Titus gladly accepted Paul’s request (παράκλησιν) to return to the Corinthians, and he did so even more zealously (σπουδαιότερος) than before, and with complete willingness (αὐθαίρετος).

This description of Titus contributed to the ongoing exemplary exhortation to the Corinthians. First, the Macedonians displayed true Christian generosity, then Christ demonstrated the fullness of grace, and now Titus becomes the living personal

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<sup>68</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 70 and 59. Note 141 on p. 59 gave several notations to original documents. Betz referred to J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 585.

example of the zeal and willingness Paul hoped the Corinthians would have. The following verses will show that Paul intended these representatives not only to be examples but also recipients of loving zeal.

Verses 18-22 deal with two interconnected issues. The entire passage is framed by the recommendation and dispatch of two further representatives beyond Titus (note the συνεπέμψαμεν in v. 18 and 22), while in vv. 19-21 Paul gave the reasons for sending these extra emissaries.

The first anonymous brother is commended in vv. 18-19.<sup>69</sup> His first qualification was his “renown in the gospel among all the churches.” This phrase probably pointed to this brother’s well known ministry for Christ (v. 18). In addition to this general reputation, this brother had been specifically appointed<sup>70</sup> to travel with the entourage for the Collection, probably due to his solid reputation.

At this point in v. 19b Paul broke into another description of the Collection which led to his comments in v. 20. Once again the Collection was described as χάρις. Here grace is closely bound to the idea of service by the phrase σὺν<sup>71</sup> τῇ χάριτι ταύτῃ διακονουμένη ὑφ’ ὑμῶν “this gracious act which is being administered by us.” This statement implies both divine initiative (grace) and human instrumentality (administered by us) in the Collection project. Paul saw himself and the Corinthians as obediently joining the activity of God, a joining which had two purposes emphasized by Paul.<sup>72</sup> The first purpose of the Collection

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<sup>69</sup> Some commentators have speculated that the original names have been deleted, and Nickle suggests that these two are Barsabbas and Judas, p. 20. None of the theories is acceptable, and one can speculate why Paul did not personally name these two, Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 435. Possibly, it would be left to Titus (as Paul’s main envoy) to introduce them personally.

<sup>70</sup> Betz (*2 Corinthians*, 74) insisted that this indicated a Hellenistic democratic process which forced these two representatives upon Paul (and thus he indicated their inferior status by not naming them). However, Acts 14:23 employs this word (χειροτονέω) to describe Paul and Barnabas appointing leaders, not a voting process.

<sup>71</sup> There is some textual question on this preposition. This is a harder reading than ἐν, but the sense is clear either way.

<sup>72</sup> The two purposes are indicated by the preposition πρὸς. See Wallace, 380.



was for the glory of the Lord, which perhaps pointed to the overflowing thanksgivings that result from the gift to Jerusalem (9:11-13). The second purpose was for “our eagerness (προθυμία)” to be demonstrated. In 8:12 this eagerness is the guarantee to the acceptability of the gift, and it is the key attitudinal element displayed by the gracious gift of the Collection.

Paul wrote 8:20-21 as he considered the functional role of these representatives in administering the gift. The opening participle στελλόμενοι indicates that Paul intended to take great precautions in organizing and delivering the Collection.<sup>73</sup> Here Paul employed a rare word to refer to the Collection, ἀδρότης “generosity/abundance” (from the adjective ἀδρός meaning stout, strong, full-grown, ripe).<sup>74</sup> This unique term may proleptically have indicated the agricultural imagery that will occupy Paul in 9:6-15 and may even provide an indication of why Paul referred to the Collection as “fruit” in Romans 15:28. Either way it seems to connote a sense of fullness of completeness for the Collection. Verse 21 gives a further substantiation of Paul’s careful preparations, “we intend good before the Lord and humans.” Blamelessness in the Collection was crucial in its process and delivery, especially in the Corinthian situation (after the comments on v. 24 this necessity will be explored).

Verse 22 presents the third representative that Paul was sending (epistolary aorist συνεπέμψαμεν). This one appears to have been a personal associate of Paul, for he had been tested by Paul and found zealous on many occasions. Furthermore, according to Paul, this representative is very eager to come to the Corinthians, because (like Paul in 7:16) he has much confidence in the Corinthians.

Verse 23 rounds out the recommendations with some final complements to each of the envoys: Titus is Paul’s partner and co-worker with the Corinthians, the other two are the “apostles” (just meaning “sent ones”) of the churches and as such

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<sup>73</sup> Martin, 276.

<sup>74</sup> Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. ed. by Henry Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), s. v. ἀδρός.

they are the glory of Christ.<sup>75</sup> To close this particular recommendation, Paul exhorted<sup>76</sup> the Corinthians to demonstrate the love he had boasted about. This demonstration to the appointed envoys was to be genuine Christian hospitality, but would also be an observable testimony to the various churches now involved in this project of the loving generosity that Paul had boasted about (and that will become crucial in 9:1-5).<sup>77</sup>

Before moving on to 9:1-5 some pertinent remarks should be made concerning 8:16-23 as a whole. First, Paul revealed in this section a great deal of forethought about the how the Collection should be carried out. Paul realized that how others perceived the gift and its collection could deeply impact the overall meaning and reception of the Collection.<sup>78</sup> Second, all three of these men represented a standard of Christian living meant to urge the Corinthians to generous and loving giving.<sup>79</sup> Next it is helpful to bring in Witherington's conclusions as to why the Collection was such a potentially explosive topic between Paul and the Corinthians, and thus why this care and careful explanation were necessary. Paul had refused to accept the typical financial benefits of a patronage relationship with the Corinthians. Instead he worked for his own needs while simultaneously serving them (see 2 Cor. 11:7-11), possibly in order to avoid contributing to the factiousness of Corinth.<sup>80</sup> Paul rejected this regular Hellenistic status marker (a thing which the Corinthians seem to have objected to at some point, cf. 2 Cor. 11:7-11). The

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<sup>75</sup> Witherington, Conflict and Community, 422-23.

<sup>76</sup> Ἐδεξιὺν . . . ἐνδεικνύμενοι is probably a Semitic idiom "to definitely demonstrate" cf. Furnish, II Corinthians, 425.

<sup>77</sup> Betz is probably only partially right in assigning v. 24 a peroratio function as closing exhortation based on what Paul as said, for it certainly did not sum up all of 8:1-23, and in fact introduced the new concept of boasting which is linked intentionally to 9:1-5. See 2 Corinthians, 82ff.

<sup>78</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 85.

<sup>79</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 87. Note that Murphy-O'Connor gave the best treatment of this unit.

<sup>80</sup> Witherington, Conflict and Community, 417.

powerful matters of money, honor, and shame were interwoven into the Collection in a way that demanded Paul's utmost clarity and transparency to the Corinthians. Paul continued to believe that he could properly exercise his authority over them as a spiritual mentor and direct them toward beneficent giving (which he refused for himself) that would be a bond between congregations.<sup>81</sup> The recommendations and precautions in 8:16-23 (as well as chs. 8 and 9 in general) reflect this careful balance of relationship between Paul and Corinth, a balance between Paul's independence from Corinthian patronage and his ongoing authoritative role.

2 Corinthians 9:1-5. The role of the first few words of ch. 9 *περὶ μὲν γὰρ* have been discussed above (that this combination never begins a new letter, and that it probably provides a justification for the preceding material according to Stowers). Chapter 9 unfolded as Paul springboarded off of two key terms in his continuing exhortation to the Corinthians concerning the Collection. These two key terms are "boasting" in 8:24 and "blessing" in 9:5. 9:1-5 appears to be the result of Paul's recollection of his own boasting concerning the zeal and lavish love of the Corinthians, for he went on in 9:1-5 to give some further (and perhaps more pressing) reasons why the three envoys were sent. 9:6-15 flowed from Paul's mention of *εὐλογία* in 9:5 as an unpacking of the concept of blessing.

The use of *γὰρ* in 9:1 does point to the resumption of the discussion of 8:16-23 in some way,<sup>82</sup> probably providing some further distinctive reasons for the sending of the envoys. This is signified by the cognate for the common designation of the Collection in 8:16-23, service (*διακονία* see 8:19-20) now specified as for the saints. Paul then admitted a disclaimer, that it was superfluous (*περισσόν*, probably playing somewhat on the frequent occurrences of *περισσ-* stems in these two chapters) for him to write to them concerning this service. Two issues naturally arise here. About what exactly is it superfluous for Paul to write? And, if it is

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<sup>81</sup> Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 418-19. Martin further adduced a quotation from Cicero "In public service take all pains to avoid the charge of avarice," 279.

<sup>82</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 425.

superfluous, why does he give an added exposition on the Collection in 9:6-15? The latter question we have answered above: it appears that Paul's presentation in 9:6-15 is an extended exposition on the concept of blessing which came to his mind as a result of 9:5. Paul knew this concept of blessing was central to the Collection, but he did not have an appropriate opportunity to explain it until 9:6-15. What is superfluous is probably the absolutely crucial attitudinal component of this gift, eagerness (προθυμία) or zeal (σπουδή/ζήλος). This decision is based on the fact that in v. 2 it is exactly these two qualities that Paul has boasted about concerning the prior commitment (ἀπο πέρυσι, from a year previously) to the Corinthians to the Collection project. Paul knew their zeal personally and had no need to exhort them further concerning it. However, in 9:6-15 Paul would go one to explain theologically why this eager attitude is so vital. The Macedonians have been the recipients of Paul's reports about this eagerness, which had the effect of stirring up most of the Macedonians (ἐρέθιζω, to provoke or challenge<sup>83</sup>) to give generously as described in 8:1-5.

The δὲ of v. 1 "on the one hand it is superfluous for me to write to your concerning the service" is answered by the μὲν of v. 3 "on the other hand I sent the brothers." 8:20-21 gave the external problem that the envoys solved, guaranteeing to the Corinthians (and other churches) that the Collection was honestly gathered and delivered. This (according to Witherington's comments) was of particular concern to the Corinthians who had a somewhat unstable patronage relationship with Paul. 9:3-5 now gives the internal reasons for commissioning these representatives. These internal reasons arose out of Paul's concern that the Corinthians would not be ready with their generous gift. This would have several detrimental results: Paul's boast would be emptied (v. 3), Paul and the Corinthians would be shamed in the presence of the visiting Macedonians (v. 4), and the gift would become an extortion instead of a blessing (v. 5). Thus the sending of the brothers was cast as a preventative and preparatory task (note again the recurrence

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<sup>83</sup> Liddell and Scott, s. v.

of προ- compounds in 9:5 as in 8:11-12).<sup>84</sup> Verse 5 restrikes a key theme from 8:12-15 (and from the Macedonian example of 8:1-5) that the attitude (and not the amount) of the giving is the crucial element. If Paul must induce the Corinthians to give after he arrives, then the Collection would have become a crude extortion (πλεονεξία). Paul planned to be particularly diligent in avoiding the charge of extortion, for it appears that some had already (2 Cor. 7:2) alleged this against him.<sup>85</sup> This same problem continued in Paul's ministry, for he would be accused of mishandling funds again later in 2 Corinthians 12:17-18. If 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 displayed some distance between Paul and the Collection, this passage in 2 Corinthians strikingly portrayed how Paul and his personal reputation are closely tied to the Collection, particularly with the Corinthians.

#### 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

As has been suggested above, this passage was an exposition by Paul on the concept of blessing. It is interesting to note the lexical shift from λογεία in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 to εὐλογία here. In addition, this passage is saturated with OT allusions and quotations.<sup>86</sup> Murphy-O'Connor has overstated the shift by claiming that after resorting to "moral blackmail" in 9:1-5 Paul now turns to more theological reasons for generosity.<sup>87</sup> Throughout Paul was concerned about the nature of the Collection, as shown by the concept of "blessing" occurring first in 9:5. 9:1-5 was not so much blackmail as it was Paul's deepest concern for the honor of the Corinthians, himself, and the Collection project as a whole.

This passage has two foundations that form its meaning. Georgi (and others) have pointed out the "sapiental" nature of the material and reasoning in 9:6-15.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Witherington pointed out that the use of ἐάν with the aorist subjunctive refers to a real possibility and reminds one of the vital importance of honor and saving face in the ancient world, *Conflict and Community*, 426.

<sup>85</sup> Barrett, 235.

<sup>86</sup> Both of these facets are pointed out by Panikulam, 54.

<sup>87</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 89

<sup>88</sup> Georgi, 94-95. Note the allusions to Proverbs, concepts of reward, consequence, and choice, all common wisdom themes.

The other foundation of this passage is its agricultural imagery and principles. In fact, Betz argued that Paul here employed ancient folk agricultural wisdom with little or no “Christianization” of this material. Even in the quotation of Scripture Paul was simply drawing notions from ancient folk religion.<sup>89</sup> One must attend to these issues when examining this passage.

The wisdom background emerges immediately in 9:6 where Paul quoted a proverbial saying set with agricultural imagery and chiasmic form (sow-sparing/sparing-reap, sow-blessing/blessing-reap).<sup>90</sup> This has several possible parallels but no exact match in the OT.<sup>91</sup> This verse is very similar in logic and structure to Paul’s comment in Galatians 6:7-9 (sow-flesh/flesh-reap, sow-spirit/spirit-reap). The use of ἐπ’ εὐλογίαις here is adverbial and parallel to φειδομένως which contrasts sparingly with “blessingly.” This is not a mere hedonistic principle of “if you give more, you will get more.” On the contrary, Paul was reiterating the attitudinal and intentional aspects of Christian giving, which became crucial to his exposition here.<sup>92</sup> The first part of the chiasm points to the attitude inherent in the action, while the second points to the result. Paul was not ultimately concerned with the financial *abundance* of this gift (as has been demonstrated above), since the *attitude* of the givers was all important. This fact (compounded with the reference to “extortion” above and the negative connotation of φειδομένως which may be translated “miserly, niggardly”<sup>93</sup>) helps to reveal why the attitudinal component is all important. In 9:6 Paul makes the audacious inference that the attitude of the givers (sowing) is what really determines the effect (reaping), without regard to the amount. Giving that is done as a blessing is the only giving that truly results in a blessing being conferred upon the recipients. For this reason, the common translation of “bountifully” (NRSV) is infelicitous, for the

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<sup>89</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 112.

<sup>90</sup> Barrett, 236.

<sup>91</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians gave a list of allusions on 440.

<sup>92</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 447.

<sup>93</sup> Liddell and Scott, s. v.

concern is not in the amount of return but in the quality of the effects, as already argued. This truth may be the general thesis of which the rest of vv. 7-15 intends to unpack. Paul continued to discuss the importance of attitude in giving (sowing) in 7-11 and then shifted to the effects (reaping) in 11-15.

Verse 7a-b again presents the attitude of the giver. There is an ellipsis here, but the sense of the whole is easily supplied: “Each one should give just as he intends in the heart, not out of pain (λύπη) or compulsion (ἀνάγκη).” The attitudinal component is indicated by heart (καρδία) and its willing intentions (προαιρέομαι, to choose deliberately, to determine previously<sup>94</sup>). This is the first of the OT allusions, and here Paul made reference to Deuteronomy 15:10 “You shall surely give him whatever he needs, and you shall not have pain (λυπήθησιν) in your heart (καρδία) when you give.” (translation mine) The connection between λύπη and λυπέω demonstrates the allusion as Paul adapted the attitude toward giving to the needy commanded by God in Deuteronomy 15:7-11 in order to illumine the importance of such giving.

The liberal, ungrudging giving in Deuteronomy 15 was urged in light of the ongoing presence of the needy (v. 7) and the need to maintain proper generosity in light of the sabbatical year of remission (vv. 8-9). Paul took this divine injunction toward one’s attitude in giving and generalized it to be appropriate of all Christian giving. While it is still in question as to why the attitude becomes all important in the giving, Paul went on to give the primary reason for the pinnacle importance of the attitude in giving. The substantiation comes in 7c, “for God loves a cheerful giver (ἱλαρόν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός).” This is an adaptation of LXX Proverbs 22:8 which reads “ἄνδρα ἱλαρόν καὶ δότην εὐλογεῖ ὁ θεός,” and just happens to follow a proverb on sowing and reaping (22:7). One can observe that Paul has changed a key word in this quotation from εὐλογέω to ἀγαπάω. Why would Paul do this, especially in light of the fact that 9:6-15 appears to be an exposition on the concept of blessing? Why would he substitute “God loves” for “God blesses” here? Paul desired to affirm emphatically that it is the recipient who is blessed and not the

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<sup>94</sup> Liddell and Scott, s. v.

giver. Recall 9:6 where “blessingly” is the proper mode of sowing, and the blessing which results is on the recipient and not the sower. The goal is not giving in order to receive, but to giving order to bless others. Paul made it very clear here that God loves the giver, and it is God who ultimately blesses the recipient through human instruments. Paul choose ἀγαπάω here probably for the connotation of “well pleased, content with.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, Paul has told the Corinthians that God finds full pleasure in those who give eagerly and blessingly (based upon God’s commands in Deut. 15 and the quote from Prov. 22:8, and reflected in exhortations to generous giving throughout these two chapters). The pleasing of God has intrinsic value, but it also has a further divinely intended function as Paul would go on to explain.

The pleasure of God is crucial in generous giving, because God is the only one who is able to cause all grace to overflow to persons (v. 8). The use of grace here is nearly identical to 8:1; it is the activity of God among persons which gives them the ability to give eagerly and generously (as well as other gifts, cf. 8:7). The overflowing (περισεύω) graces exhibited among the Macedonians (see 8:2) and exhorted of the Corinthians (see 8:7) is only possible through God’s provision, for He is the one who is able (δυνατεῖ) to cause them to overflow. Paul made it clear in v. 8 that a blessing should be intended for the good of the recipient. The ἵνα clause in the second half of v. 8 shows that God enables those with the proper attitude to overflow in giving. This clause says ἵνα ἐν παντὶ πάντοτε πᾶσαν αὐτάρκειαν ἔχοντες περισσεύητε εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν. The Greek text reveals the recurrence of πασ- stems throughout the second half of this verse. The participle ἔχοντες may be taken causally to give a translation “in order that you may abound in every good work because you always have all that you need.” The final words of this is a translation expresses the term αὐτάρκεια, a term which was a high Stoic value denoting disciplined self-sufficiency. But in this context it means having all that one needs (for daily life) in order to help others in need with any surplus provided by God. Paul has transformed this term from its philosophical use in two ways. First, αὐτάρκεια is now the gift of God and not the product of human self-

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<sup>95</sup> Liddell and Scott, s. v.



discipline. Second, it is no longer a virtue of freedom and stable independence, but a gift that promotes *interconnectedness*.<sup>96</sup> Paul has generalized the perspective a bit here (later he will refocus upon the Collection), for he aimed at laying out the enabling power of God's grace to transform the human attitude and enable persons to do good works. (Thus the Collection falls under the general category of good works.)

Paul went on to substantiate verse 8 with a close quotation of LXX Psalm 111:9ab, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." But, the exact antecedent for "he" in the quotation is vague, requiring one to ask which part of verse 8 Paul intended to substantiate. Does v. 9 prove God's willingness and ability to pour out grace on others? Or does it give evidence for the abundance of good works done by the person whom God so graces? Two pieces of evidence argue for choosing the latter option. The first is the context of the Psalm 111 (112 in English). This entire Psalm is devoted to a descriptive outline of the deeds of those who fear God and delight in His commands, 111:1 (note the strong "wisdom" flavor of this Psalm contributing to the sapiential overtones in 9:6-15).<sup>97</sup> One can assume that Paul knew the larger context of this Psalm quotation. The second piece of evidence comes from v. 10 where righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is not designated as God's characteristic action but as the characteristic action of the Corinthians ("your righteousness"), and so it is the Corinthians' (and not God's) righteousness that is spoken of in v. 9. Both of these pieces of evidence show that the referent of the quotation in 9:9 were the generous Corinthians who could overflow with good works by giving to the poor in the Collection.

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<sup>96</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 448. Interestingly, Betz's interpretation of Paul's use of this term is very similar.

<sup>97</sup> This quotation has caused interpreters much consternation, for they take it as axiomatic that Paul must be referring v.9 to God which clashes with its original context in Psalm 111 (see Murphy-O'Connor, 92 and Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 111-12). However, the problem is solved if this quotation substantiates the latter half of v. 8 and not the first half.

The agricultural and sapiential setting continues in v. 10 where God performs several actions with regard to the Corinthians. God “provides” (χοραγέω) seed and bread. God even “multiplies” (πληθύνω) seed. And, God “increases” (αὐξάνω) the harvest of righteousness. All of these verbs are in the future tense, and so Paul is setting forth the certain promise that God will do all these things for the Corinthians as they participate in the Collection. This verse contains allusions to both Isaiah 55:10 (supplying seed and bread, in comparison to God’s word) and Hosea 10:12 (a harvest of righteousness, following the LXX instead of the MT). Looking a bit closer at the agricultural imagery, one sees that God supplies both the initial seed for planting (he provides seed for the sower, σπόρον τῷ σπείροντι) and the resulting necessary bread for food (ἄρτον εἰς βρώσιν). This is probably in reference to v. 8 where the Corinthians always have everything they need in all things (ἐν παντὶ πάντοτε πᾶσαν αὐτάρκειαν ἔχοντες). Beyond supplying these material necessities, God goes further to multiply seed and promote an even greater harvest of righteousness (through giving extra resources to the poor). The phrase τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης is a genitive of apposition (or an exegetical genitive) and can be translated “the harvest which is righteousness”.<sup>98</sup> Again, Paul pointed to the end result of the Corinthians’ generosity as being the result of God’s gracious provision. In this instance as in Matt. 6:1, δικαιοσύνη ὑμῶν, refers to acts of mercy and piety done by the Corinthians (note how in Matt. 6:1 δικαιοσύνη is followed first by a reference to almsgiving).<sup>99</sup>

This reference to harvest moved Paul on to expound on the results of the Corinthians’ eager giving.<sup>100</sup> After discussing God’s gracious enabling in v. 7-10, Paul described the effects of the Collection in 11-15. The first set of effects are briefly related in v. 11. The Corinthians will be enriched in all things (ἐν παντὶ πλουτιζόμενοι) as they participate in this grace. However, this enrichment has a purpose; it is an enrichment for all sincerity/generosity (εἰς πᾶσαν ἀπλότητα,

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<sup>98</sup> Wallace, 95.

<sup>99</sup> Also see Panikulam, 55.

<sup>100</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 450

with the εἰς denoting purpose). This reference makes great sense in light of 8:1-5, where it was in the depths of poverty that God enabled the Macedonians to overflow in the “riches of their sincerity” (εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν, 8:2). Paul had deep confidence that the grace of God would be realized in the Corinthians just as it was in the Macedonians. The second effect was upon Paul and his compatriots, who were moved to thank God for the grace that would be demonstrated among the Corinthians in the Collection (11b, cf. Paul’s exhortation to this grace in 8:7).

Yet, the greatest emphasis was devoted to the effects that the Collection had upon the needy saints in Jerusalem (vv. 12-15). Paul introduced here another designation for the Collection: “the service of this ministry” (ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης). There are two possible background contexts for the newly included term λειτουργία. Either it can refer to public social service (common throughout the ancient Hellenistic world<sup>101</sup>), or it can refer to priestly service (as it is commonly employed in the LXX). In fact, Paul seems to have combined the two possible uses of the term in some fashion. Philippians 2:17, 30 is the example for this combination. Paul was very much at ease placing λειτουργία alongside other cultic terms in 2:17, but then in 2:30 he employed it to refer to the financial aid delivered by Epaphroditus. It is paramount then not to allow a modern perspective to bifurcate between the monetary and priestly connotations of this word, connotations which Paul seems to have held together. Thus Paul employed this phrase “service of this ministry” to refer to both the monetary and the religious significance of the Collection, as becomes clear in the rest of v. 12.

The Collection was to have two effects upon the Jerusalem church. First, it definitely fills up their present economic lack (προσαναπληρώω, “to fill up the full measure,”<sup>102</sup> and ὑστερήμα, cf. 8:14). Additionally, the gift would cause overflowing thankgivings to God. The superlative sense of these thankgivings was

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<sup>101</sup> This was emphasized by Betz, 2 Corinthians, 117.

<sup>102</sup> Liddell and Scott, s. v.

communicated by the return of the word περισσεύω and the unusual plural form of εὐχαριστία.<sup>103</sup>

Verse 13 goes on to describe the further action of the Jerusalem congregation. The interpretation hinges on who is the subject of the participle δοξάζοντες, for grammatically it is possible that it could refer either to the Corinthians glorifying God or the Jerusalemites glorifying God.<sup>104</sup> It seems best (though realizing that both positions are possible) that the initial prepositional phrase “through this approved service” (διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης, where δοκιμῆς is an attributed genitive which describes the service<sup>105</sup>) should be followed by a comma. This would introduce the rest of the verse which could be translated as follows “they (the Jerusalemites) glorify God because of (ἐπὶ) your submission to the confession of the gospel of Christ.”<sup>106</sup> If this is not the case, then Paul was either being slightly redundant in giving both the means (διὰ) and the basis (ἐπὶ) for the Corinthians glorifying God, or the second phrase could function epexegetically. However, it seems better to say that the first phrase indicates means, while the second give the reason why the Jerusalem church glorifies God, an interpretation that fits better with the overall thrust of vv. 11-15, which focuses on the effects of the giving on others. This is further supported by the fact that the participles in v. 14 clearly refer to the actions of the Jerusalem church.

Of great interest are the two noun clauses contained in the prepositional phrase begun by ἐπὶ for these give the actual basis for the Jerusalem church’s glad response. The first clause τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ is a very unique (and thus difficult to interpret) combination from

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<sup>103</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 444.

<sup>104</sup> The NRSV translates it as the Corinthians glorifying God. Martin, 293 took it in the other sense.

<sup>105</sup> Wallace, 89.

<sup>106</sup> The alternative translation as produced in the NRSV is “Through the testing of this ministry you [The Corinthians] glorify God by your obedience to the confession . . .”

Paul.<sup>107</sup> Since Paul frequently employs ὑποτάσσω to mean submission (see Rom. 10:3, 1 Cor. 14:34, et al.), its use here indicates that we should take ὁμολογίας as an objective genitive, “submission to your confession.” The confession would then be “with reference to” (εἰς) the gospel of Christ.<sup>108</sup> Thus the first reason for the Jerusalem saints glorifying God is that the Corinthians (and other Gentiles) have followed through on their belief in Christ by this action. The second reason is “the sincere generosity of your sharing with them and with all.” Again, the term ἀπλότης reiterated the importance of the eager and generous attitude with which one shares (κοινωνία), a sharing which is not limited to Jerusalem but extends to all.

The final effect of the Collection was that the Jerusalem church would continue to long for the Corinthians with prayers (αὐτῶν δεήσει ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐπιποθούτων, continuing action is connoted by the present participle), because of the surpassing grace that God has bestowed upon them as demonstrated in their giving (v. 14). Paul showed that the cause of all the thanksgiving is immediately attributable to the grace of God operating in the Corinthians.

This grace is finally returned to God in the form of thanksgiving in verse 15 (worded similarly to 8:16, recall the connection of χάρις and εὐχαριστώ). An exact referent for this gift is hard to nail down within this exultant conclusion. If one looks to Romans 5: 15, 17 it seems that Paul employs δωρεᾶ to refer to the whole activity of grace and righteousness as focused in Christ. Perhaps a similar broad perspective is operating here. The gift is indescribable (ἐνεκδιηγῆτος) because it surpasses human expectations and abilities. As Paul reflected on the entire circle of grace set in motion by God and finding its climax in Christ, he must resound with thanksgiving to God.

A few remarks can be made in closing to draw together the examination of these two rich chapters. First, we can re-emphasize the importance of attitude in Christian giving. The sincere and generous attitude is the gift of God, opening the floodgates for a wave of God’s grace to flow through. Next, we can mention the

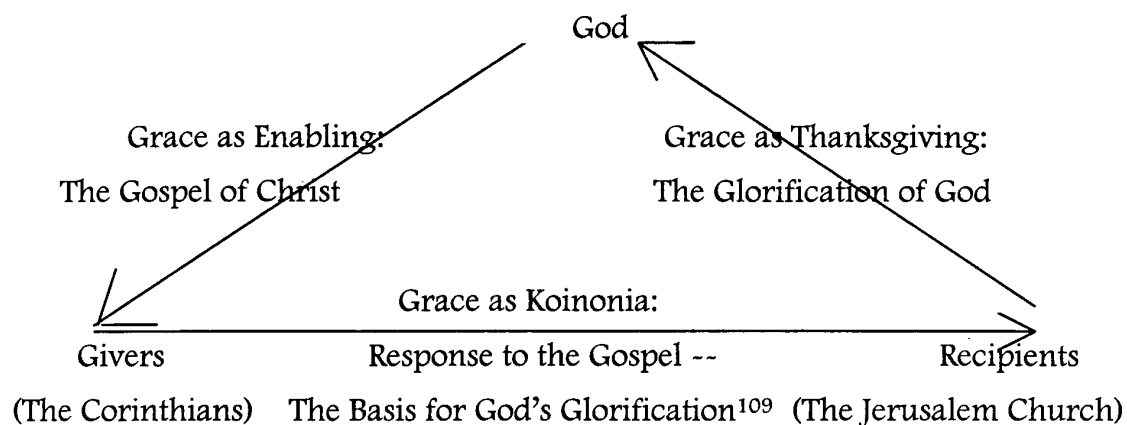
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<sup>107</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 444.

<sup>108</sup> Wallace listed the reference/respect meaning of εἰς, 369.

delicate and economic situation that Paul had to deal with at Corinth. He constructs the two chapters to lead them to giving without authoritatively commanding them to do so. This is a sensitive issue, but one of great spiritual and financial importance both to Corinth and Jerusalem. The Collection meets pressing needs of hunger and poverty in Jerusalem, and it is necessary to the ongoing spiritual maturing of the Corinthians. Finally, the key concept of both chapters is grace, enabling grace sent by God and expressed in the blessing of the Collection.

George Panikulam put forth a pictograph which truly captures what Paul expounded here:



As Bassler describes it, grace comes from God, grace works in the Corinthians, grace is given back to God by the Jerusalem church.<sup>110</sup> In all of its aspects the Collection is imbued with grace from salvation/transformation to service to thanksgiving. Paul viewed this cycle of grace as God's means to bless the needy Jerusalem church through the eager cooperation of the Corinthians as His instruments through grace.

#### Romans 15:22-33

In this closing passage of the epistle to the Romans, Paul related his expected travel plans to the Roman church, mostly to prepare them for his upcoming visit to them on the way to Spain (vv. 22-24, 28), a visit which he longed to make, cf. 1:11-

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<sup>109</sup> Panikulam, 57.

<sup>110</sup> Bassler, 109.

15 (note how these references frame the letter, perhaps indicating the most specific reason for the letter).<sup>111</sup> However, the more pressing theological issue which drove this letter is the standing of Jew and Gentile in salvation history, especially at its present juncture.<sup>112</sup> Paul closed Romans with some references to the Collection since it was an integral part of his coming travel plans. In doing so, he sounded a number of notes already heard in previously investigated passages, but he also added some unique material.

Romans 9-11. First, however, we must comment on Romans 9-11, the theological climax of the letter, especially as it relates to the Eschatological Approach discussed in chapter 2 of this study. It is true that Paul took a minority theme of the OT and raise it to predominant status in his interpretation of salvation history. Instead of the more dominant “Pilgrimage of the Nations” motif (where the nations come to Jerusalem to find the true God, e.g. Zechariah 7:20-23 et. al.), Paul employed a “Jealousy” motif (Deut. 32:21) in which the salvation of the Gentiles provokes Israel to return to God by faith. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, but he amplifies his ministry to provoke his own people and thus save some of them (Rom. 11:13-14). This return of Israel would then signal the coming of the eschaton with all its blessings (11:15-16), but Israel is hardened until the full number of the Gentiles come to salvation (11:25). Then, in the end all Israel will be saved (cf. 11:26 which seems to refer to the total number of Gentiles *and* returned Jews all saved by faith).

Some important pieces of evidence must be noted. While Paul refers to the Collection as διακονία μου in Romans 11:13 and 15:31. In 15:31 he specifies it as “the service to Jerusalem,” but 11:3 seems to refer much more broadly to his apostolic mission to the Gentiles. Therefore, 11:13 does not refer to the Collection. Paul envisioned a coming (even a necessary) visit to Spain where Christ has never been proclaimed (15:20-21). Therefore, it seems reasonable that the present status of the Pauline mission could not have represent the “full number of the Gentiles.”

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<sup>111</sup> Dunn, Romans, 880-881.

<sup>112</sup> Moo, 21 and see. n. 73.

Third, Paul hopes that his provoking will save “some” of his people (11:14), this certainly cannot be identical with the massive return of Israelites to faith in God through Christ (11:25-27). It seems clear that the Collection cannot function as a climactic eschatological act in light of these incongruities.

The last consideration addresses the relation of chapters 15 and 16 to the main body of Romans. Textual evidence seems to indicate that 15:1-16:24 were either removed or latter appended to the main body of Romans 1-14. The position of this study is that Romans 1-14 constitutes the main body of the epistle, while chapters 15-16 deal with personal matters that are secondary to the main theological purpose of the epistle. The goal of the letter is to explain the salvation-historical relation of Jew and Gentile, and not to introduce Paul’s Collection project to the Romans. (Although, Paul may have intended the entire letter to prepare the Romans for his coming visit.) Explicit references to the Collection in Romans are limited to the letter closing outside of the letter body which seems to end at 15:13, so the Collection plays no explicit part in Paul’s conception of salvation history as presented in 1:16-15:13. The passages concerning the Collection were only mentioned because they affected Paul’s travel plans. Finally, Moo when discussing the purpose of Romans said, “There is no evidence that it [The Collection] was Paul’s overriding concern.”<sup>113</sup> All of these factors argue strongly against seeing the Collection as the penultimate push to the eschaton by Paul as is asserted by the Eschatological Approach to the Collection. The Collection is not an integral part of salvation history as presented by Paul in Romans 9-11.

Romans 15:22-29. In verses 22-24 Paul reiterated his earnest desire to visit the Roman church and to be sent on by them to Spain. Verses 25-29 are a brief digression upon the current mission of the Collection that will delay his visit to them just a bit longer. Verses 25-26 bring up several familiar issues. Paul once again referred to the Collection as a service (διακονία) and that it is specifically directed to the church at Jerusalem. He also alluded the eager attitude that he exhorted to the Corinthians by stating that Macedonia and Achaia were pleased (εὐδοκέω) to do

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<sup>113</sup> Moo, 18.



something to share (κοινωνία) with the Jerusalem church in their hour of need. Paul recalled this activity with seeming glad remembrance of the willing cooperation of his churches in a project that would build unity through sharing.<sup>114</sup> He also clarified the economic impact of the gift by pointing out that the ministry was directed specifically to the “poor among the saints in Jerusalem,” the needy members of the Jerusalem church.<sup>115</sup>

It is in v. 27 (which is closely tied to vv. 25-26 by the repetition of “they were pleased”) that Paul introduced some new concepts. Beyond being pleased to do this the Gentiles “owe” (οφείλω) it to the Jerusalem church; in some sense the Gentiles owed the Jerusalem church a debt. He gave the reason for this type of language in the latter half of v. 27: “For if the Gentiles have participated in spiritual benefits from them, then they are indebted to minister to them in material things. (εἰ γὰρ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινωνήσαν τὰ ἔθνη, οφείλουσιν καίεν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργήσαι αὐτοῖς.) The initial sharing (aorist of κοινωνέω) was in spiritual realities (πνευματικός)<sup>116</sup> and the flow was from Jerusalem (where the original Christian congregation came into being) to the Gentiles. Paul may well have undertaken the Collection to root the Gentile congregations in the historical realities of the gospel in Jerusalem (as well as for the sake of genuine charity).<sup>117</sup> This is where the debt arose from. The historical place of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the rest of salvation history, and Paul would not let

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<sup>114</sup> It is true that Paul does not mention the Galatian churches here as he does in 1 Cor. 16:1, but representatives from Berea and Derbe are mentioned in Acts 20:4. Perhaps Paul left Galatia out since the Macedonian and Corinthian issues were in the forefront of his mind as he wrote Romans from Corinth.

<sup>115</sup> Georgi contended that a transformation has occurred in Paul’s language and intent. The Collection was now Paul’s project, not the idea of the Jerusalem leadership. The “poor” became a sociological designation rather than a pious title, 114. However, as seen in the discussion of Gal. 2:10 both of these assumptions read too much into a reconstructed history of Paul.

<sup>116</sup> This probably refers to the gospel and its salvific benefits, especially since the gospel was to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16) and the Jews were entrusted with a special original place in salvation history (see the olive tree metaphor in 11:17-24).

<sup>117</sup> Moo, 905.

the Gentile churches detach themselves from the historical roots of their faith. In light of these spiritual blessings the Gentiles now owed it to the Jerusalem church to serve (λειτουργέω) them in material things (τοῖς σαρκικοῖς). The theological balance point to rooting the Gentile congregations in the history of the gospel was to prove to the Jewish believers that God was truly active among the Gentiles in such a way that ministry can now flow from Gentile believers to Jewish believers.<sup>118</sup> It is fascinating that the term for priestly service (λειτουργέω) is applied to the ministry that flows from Gentile to Jew, and not vice versa as might have been expected.<sup>119</sup> The Collection was a spiritual and indeed a priestly service performed by Gentile believers to the Jerusalem church, which gave balance and reciprocity between the grace of God active in both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Recalling Philippians 4:15-20 we see that such a close connection between the monetary and the spiritual was no leap for Paul. In the letter to the Philippians Paul gladly recounts the ministry of the Philippian congregation to him, which was not just giving and receiving (v. 15) but indeed was a “fragrant offering, a sacrifice pleasing to God.” Paul saw financial aid as having definite spiritual implications, and so it operates here in Romans 15. There is no inferiority implied by contrasting the spiritual with the material, for the latter is a priestly service which blesses others and is truly pleasing to God.

In v. 28 Paul transitioned back to his main point, going to Spain through Rome. He said that this is exactly what he will do when he has completed this task and “sealed this fruit to them” (σφραγισάμενος αὐτοῖς τὸν καρπόν). Dunn explained the common confusion over the exact meaning of this phrase. He concluded that the “fruit” is none other than the Collection (certainly not “the full number of the Gentiles”) and that “sealing” it carried the marketplace imagery of transferring sacks of fruit to the recipients.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, this phrase referred to Paul's delivery of the Collection to the Jerusalem church. Paul would then come to

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<sup>118</sup> Moo, 906.

<sup>119</sup> Dunn, Romans, 882-83.

<sup>120</sup> Dunn, Romans, 877.

Rome. The fullness of blessing he anticipated is most likely from the mutual blessing he gives and receives from the Roman church (cf. 1:12).<sup>121</sup>

Romans 15:30-33. Paul made his final request to the Romans after reminding them of his intent to visit. These verses display Paul's premonition of the storm that awaited him in Rome. He beseeched (παρακαλέω) the Roman church to pray for two things: that he would be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem and that the Jerusalem church would gladly accept the Collection gift. Paul was accused as one who undermined the Law and traditions of the Jews (Acts 21:28). Paul knew that this (false) report about him had spread like wildfire, and that nationalistic Jews would be glad to eliminate him, for they saw him as a threat to God's people. The syntax closely links the second concern with the first. It is most possible that the Jerusalem church would be placed in a very awkward position by accepting a gift of money from Gentiles delivered by the "apostate" Paul.<sup>122</sup> This intense nationalistic pressure from the Jews on the church in Jerusalem would have definitely complicated the delivery, reception, and meaning of this gift, especially since it was organized by Paul. Verses 32-33 illumine v. 29. Through their prayers and God's will, Paul hoped to come to the Romans in joy and to be refreshed (the two sides of the fullness of blessing in v. 29), and he prayed that the God of peace will be with them as he hopes God will bring peace to Jerusalem as Paul delivered the hard labors of the Collection to what he hoped would be a gladly receiving church.

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<sup>121</sup> Moo, 907. Thus, this is not the eschatological blessing induced by the Collection.

<sup>122</sup> This whole paragraph closely follows Dunn's interpretation, Romans, 883. It was nationalism, political pressures, and fear of the Jews which caused the church's caution in Acts 21 and which erupts in a riot in Acts 22. Nickle's reconstruction of Acts 21:20 which lacks any textual evidence tried to force this point, but it is unjustified.

### Concluding Summary

After this lengthy examination of the backgrounds and the texts pertinent to understanding the Collection. It will be helpful to summarize some of the main points before moving on to the next chapter

#### Galatians 2:10

1. The Galatians 2 visit should be identified with Acts 11:27-30 and 12:25, not Acts 15 or some other combination.
2. Galatians 2:7-10 emphasizes points of continuity between the dual Jewish/Gentile missions of the church in balance to 2:1-6, where Paul stressed his independence from Jerusalem.
3. Galatians 2:10 is an exception in that Christian charity becomes one major overlap between the dual missions; it is not a requirement added to Paul by Jerusalem.
4. The “poor” of 2:10 refers to the economic need of certain Christians in Jerusalem, not a pious eschatological designation.
5. The elements of zeal and doing already arise in this early letter with regard to the Collection.
6. Galatians 2:10 does not refer to the Collection proper but to the incipient impetus that later led to the Collection project.

#### 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

1. The Corinthians were gladly participating in the Collection and had probably asked Paul for guidance about it in their recent letter to him.
2. The pragmatic concern was to set aside some money from personal profits each week to avoid the problems of last minute collecting. This and the term λογεία indicate the primarily financial focus of the Collection to the Corinthians.
3. Paul exhibited some distance from the Collection, for he might not personally deliver it. At this time, appointed representatives are adequate.
4. Paul labeled the Collection as χάρις for the first time here, indicating its nature as a gracious gift.

#### 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

1. The most important dimension of giving to the Collection (with regard to the Corinthians) is the attitudinal. It is sincere/eager/voluntary giving that truly makes the gift acceptable and even opens the way for God's grace to work more richly.
2. Such eager giving has become difficult for the Corinthians (in light of their own financial position and their somewhat tenuous relationship to Paul), but it represents an important step in spiritual maturity and genuine Christian faith.
3. It was important to handle the Collection sensitively because of Paul's rocky past with the Corinthians, as well as to maintain the highest standard of integrity with finances.
4. The Collection was intended to meet real economic need in the Jerusalem church.
5. In God's economy one should give eagerly in order that God may both supply the giver's needs and bless the recipients through the instrument of the generous givers.
6. Grace saturates the Collection. It is grace that transforms the attitude to enable sincere giving. It is grace that is multiplied through eager givers. It is grace that is bestowed on the recipients by aiding them, which further binds them to the givers. Finally, it is grace that is returned to God as thanksgiving.

#### Romans 15:22-33

1. The attitudinal and economic aspects of the Collection are reiterated here.
2. The Collection is not an integral part of Paul's understanding of salvation history as presented in chs. 9-11.
3. The spiritual and the material blessings flow between Jewish and Gentile believers as equivalent ways of doing ministry and acknowledging God's work in both groups.
4. Paul has definite fears about the reception of the Collection and his trip to Jerusalem, probably due to hostile Jewish nationalism that would oppose Paul and the Gentile mission.

After this examination and summary we may move on to an assessment of the various interpretive approaches discussed in Chapter 2 on the basis of the evidence gleaned from this investigation of the Collection texts.

## Chapter 4: The Evaluation of Interpretive Approaches

### Introduction

After surveying the major interpretive approaches taken to the Collection in Chapter 2 and carefully examining the background and key texts regarding the Collection, it is appropriate now to evaluate the validity and soundness of the various interpretive approaches employed. The same disclaimers from concerning interpretive approaches apply here: they are necessary, they are dialogically related to exegesis, they depend on background issues, and they often overlap. We will be evaluating the various approaches to judge if their framework and conclusions adequately fit the understanding of the Collection as presented through the texts examined in Chapter 3.

### The Eschatological Approach

The three main proponents of the Eschatological approach outlined above were J. Munck, K. Nickle, and R. Martin. All three of these adapted a heavy dose of the Ecumenical approach to their exegesis, but all three also came out with the final opinion that the primary drive of the Collection arose out of Paul's eschatological missiology. They draw on Romans 9-11 to say that Paul saw the Collection as "the final straw" that would provoke the Jews to jealousy and cause them to be converted to faith in Christ in large numbers. This mass conversion would then usher in the eschaton. The best defense regarding the lack of explicit mention of this by Paul anywhere else (and the notable absence of it in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9) was that Paul did not want to appear to be subordinating the Gentile mission and Gentile churches to what was really his deepest concern, the salvation of his fellow Jews.<sup>1</sup>

At many points the Eschatological approach is deficient and does not adequately deal with the evidence. First, we have shown that the Collection received no explicit mention in the theological argument of Romans, but it was set in the letter closing which summarizes Paul's travel plans. Secondly, we have shown that

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<sup>1</sup> Nickle, 142.

Paul's "provoking" ministry (see Rom. 11:13-16) was anticipated to have limited results at best. Therefore, Paul only saw himself and the fruit of his own ministry (the Gentile Christians) as having a limited effect in the provoking of the Jews, for he only hopes to "save some of them" by glorifying his ministry. This is in stark contrast to the Eschatological Approach which would assert that Paul's provoking ministry would save the fullness (πλήρωμα, cf. Rom. 11:12) of the Jews. Third, this would force Paul to an extreme degree of duplicity as he exhorts the Corinthians (and other churches) to participate in the Collection for reasons massively different than those which were actually guiding him in the project. Finally, it is interesting to note that in a letter that has been dominated by a theological discussion of Jew and Gentile in the history of salvation, when Paul does mention the Collection it has no explicitly eschatological overtones but is full of references to reciprocity, mutual service, and a desire for peace (aspects which all point to the Ecumenical Approach).

This approach is highly unacceptable when it comes to determining the interpretation of some debatable texts. It forced Nickle to see the "fullness of blessing" of Rom. 15:29 and the "many thanksgivings" of 2 Cor. 9:15 as references to the glorious results of the mass conversion of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> However, this does not comport with the overriding evidence presented in Chapter three that fits the interpretation of these passages much more integrally within their context without forcing this external reading. Such an approach also forced Martin to interpret 2 Corinthians 8:14 with regard to future eschatological blessings (not financial) flowing from the Jews to the Gentiles. Such an interpretation, if true to Paul's intent, would devastate Paul's overall argument for sharing among the churches in vv. 12-15. This points to another problem with the Eschatological Approach: it often downplays or even eliminates the recognition of the economic aspects of the Collection (while somewhat adopting the ecumenical overtones). This is problematic in light of the definite economic issues addressed clearly by Paul in 1 Corinthians. 16:1-4 and in light of the careful planning for the collection and

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<sup>2</sup> Nickle, 136.

delivery of the money in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. In addition, such a diminishing of the economic would practically disintegrate the integration of spiritual and financial realities as seen in Philippians 4:15-20 and Romans 15:27.

Therefore, the Eschatological Approach not only adds a dimension to the Collection that Paul did not envision (causing the eschatological conversion of the Jews), but it also detracts from definite emphases and arguments that are more central to the meaning and demand of the Collection for Paul. This approach is largely based on inferential intuition that simply does not stand to the test of the implicit and explicit evidence from Paul's letters. This is an approach that must be entirely rejected when interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing the meaning of the Collection.

### The Hellenistic Approach

It is absolutely impossible to argue for the elimination of all Hellenistic influences upon Paul. It is obvious that he employs Greek, writes to churches set in a Hellenistic milieu, and has himself had deep and influential contact with Hellenistic thought and practices. However, the evidence of Chapter 3 suggests that Betz has gone too far in assigning a domineering effect of ancient Hellenistic ideas and methods upon Paul.

It is certainly true that Paul employed (and perhaps had been trained in) the forms and methods of ancient rhetoric, and his letters may fruitfully be studied according to these literary practices. However, even Betz himself acknowledged that ample room must be made for Paul's unique person and style to shape and adapt these rhetorical norms.<sup>3</sup> In the background on the composition of 2 Corinthians, it has been shown that Betz's division of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is untenable on the available linguistic evidence (recall Stower's article on *περὶ μὲν γὰρ*). Thus, Betz's analysis of the two chapters as individual letters of Hellenistic administration is radically undermined. It might have been possible for Betz to reconstitute his rhetorical analysis of these two chapters and still portray them as the

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<sup>3</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 130.



correspondence of Hellenistic administration, but the blow to Betz's approach is still a severe one. In light of this evidence, one must question how reliable his identification of these two chapters as separate administrative letters can be if his rhetorical analysis is completely inapplicable. This is not to say, however, that Paul is untouched by such administrative forms, for he certainly adapts aspects of them in the writing concerning the Collection. This is particularly true with regard to letters of recommendation which 1 Corinthians 16:3 speaks of and of which 2 Corinthians 8:16-24 seems to exemplify. One can say that these epistolary and administrative forms are *adapted* by Paul for use in the Collection, rather than such forms and methods determining the overall meaning and structure of the Collection and the relevant texts.

The literary nature of these chapters is important and instructive, but the next two aspects of the Hellenistic Approach strike much more to the heart of the matter: Paul's ideological background and vocabulary (two areas that often overlap). On two minor points concerning vocabulary we may consider this influence. The term ἀπλότης occurs infrequently in the LXX (2 Sam. 15:11, 1 Chr. 29:17, 1 Ma 2:37 and four others). It does appear as a standard ethical virtue in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (some of these occurrences were discussed in Chapter 3), a set of writings which reveals a piety that thoroughly employs Hellenized concepts.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, especially in the ethical realm these testaments draw heavily upon Stoic ideal and vocabulary, including "integrity" (ἀπλότης).<sup>5</sup> Thus, Betz seems to be justified in saying that Paul learned this term and its meaning from a Hellenistic influence. However, another term exhibits a diametrically different perspective. Betz claimed that σπουδή was a common quality for recommendation in Hellenistic administration. In these contexts, σπουδή refers to the speediness or efficiency of the emissary. Paul does employ this term frequently in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and

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<sup>4</sup> H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 778.

<sup>5</sup> Kee, 779.

particularly in commending the representatives to the Corinthians, but he does *not* employ it with the meaning of “efficiency, speediness” in a task. Instead, the term refers to a person-centered yearning for other Christians, a yearning based in mutual affection and sharing (see comments on 8:16; 7:7, 14); it refers to the zealousness of love (8:7). Therefore, when examining Paul’s vocabulary and meaning discernment must be employed. While it is true that Paul drew many of his words from a Hellenistic and administrative vocabulary (quite logical since he was writing to persons in the Hellenistic milieu), he often reshaped or even transformed the connotations of this vocabulary to his theological agenda and purpose.

Betz may also be challenged regarding the ideological background of Paul, especially with regard to 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Betz claimed that this passage reflects Paul’s easy adoption of ancient religious concepts from the classical and Hellenistic worlds with little or no Christianization of them.<sup>6</sup> While it is true that sapiential material often does have international and intercultural influence and validity, it is interesting to note that Paul quoted or alluded to the OT five times in 9:6-15 (9:6 from Prov. 11:24/22:9, 9:7 from Prov. 22:8, 9:9 from Ps. 112:9, 9:10 from Is. 55:1 and Hos. 10:12, a greater concentration than anywhere else in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9), and that he here explicitly linked the giving of the Corinthians to their active submission to the gospel (9:13). Far from exhibiting little or no Christian adaptation of this sapiential material, Paul seems bent on rooting it in an OT view of God and in gospel mandates.

Therefore, the conclusion on the Hellenistic Approach is one of cautious adaptation. As Furnish warned, it is a mistake to emphasize Paul’s Hellenism over his Jewishness (or vice versa).<sup>7</sup> Betz has fallen into this error, and while not ruining his work it definitely weakens it. When interpreting the Collection it is advisable to take into account the Hellenistic background to Paul’s rhetoric, ideology, and vocabulary, but this should not induce blindness to the notable differences between Paul and the Hellenistic milieu. Paul lived in a Hellenistic world, but we must not

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<sup>6</sup> Betz, 2 Corinthians, 112.

<sup>7</sup> Furnish, Theology, 66.

forget the depth of his Jewish background and training. Furthermore, Paul understood himself as a man in Christ (Php. 3:7-8) and much of his thought has been radically determined by the revelation in Jesus Christ. Thus it is necessary to appropriately address the Jewish, Hellenistic, and uniquely Christian elements in Paul. Unfortunately, Betz's work displayed an overweighting of the Hellenistic influence. Balance and discernment between the Hellenistic, Jewish, and uniquely Christian aspects of Paul are necessary when interpreting the Collection and any other Pauline material.

### The Evolutionary Approach

Dieter Georgi's work is perhaps the most difficult to evaluate for a few reasons. First, his work is so excellent and thorough that real weaknesses are difficult to discern. Second, many of his conclusions are based primarily upon issues of chronology and criticism. His understandings of the chronology of Paul's visits to Jerusalem and the composition of letters largely shapes how he views the development of the Collection. The issues he has employed so foundationally are ones that will continue to be debated by scholars for years to come with each side having some convincing points. Third, Georgi offered his own disclaimer, "The difficulties and risks involved in this kind of historical and chronological evaluation are obvious; it must be of a hypothetical nature by necessity."<sup>8</sup> Georgi did try to give good reasons for his hypotheses, but those hypotheses are so strongly determinative of his work that a weakness in any one of them threatens his conclusions. Despite these difficulties we can evaluate some of Georgi's overall and specific conclusions.

Unfortunately, Georgi exhibits the same weaknesses of the Eschatological Approach when he adapts it as Paul's final and perhaps climatic intent for the Collection.<sup>9</sup> One can also immediately notice the many differences between the conclusions on chronology and composition adopted by Georgi and the ones

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<sup>8</sup> Georgi, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Georgi, 117ff.

employed in this study.<sup>10</sup> This fact alone will result in a chasm between the interpretations because of how heavily Georgi relied upon this. On most specific exegetical points Georgi is very sound and helpful, when his reading is not overly set by a conjectural reconstruction of history or composition. However, one may question particularly how he handles “the poor” in Galatians 2:10 which he sees as an early eschatological self-designation of the Jerusalem congregation which Paul later abandoned (this was rejected in Chapter 3). Also, his conclusions concerning the term ἰσότης in 2 Corinthians 8 have met with little support. He identified ἰσότης as a hypostasized divine principle, but this was rejected by the discussion of this term in Chapter 3. Paul employed this term to refer to the proportional equality that God intended among his people (as revealed in Exodus 16), not as an representation of God himself. These display chinks in an exegetical armor that is very sound and insightful in other places.

Georgi’s story of the evolution of the Collection can be questioned at several points. In light of the positions taken in this study one must seriously question Georgi’s reconstruction of the history of the Collection with its various transformations of purpose and meaning. Against, Georgi’s Evolutionary Approach this study has demonstrated the connectedness of Paul’s stance toward giving in the connection between σπουδή and ποίεω between Galatians 2:10 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 (particularly 8:10, 16 and 9:2, 7). There is minor development between 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (where Paul did not anticipate delivering the Collection personally) and 2 Corinthians 8-9 (where Paul took more personal involvement in the Collection), but there is not a massive revisioning of the Collection project as Georgi suggested. Finally, it has been shown that Romans 15:22-31 shows connection with 2 Corinthians 8-9 on the importance of attitude, the reciprocal sharing of spiritual and material blessings, and the ecumenical impact of the Collection. The developments that occurred in the Collection are largely due to

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<sup>10</sup> Especially with regard to the dating and setting of Gal. 2 and the composition of 2 Corinthians and to a lesser degree the composition of Romans.

external factors (rocky relations with Corinth and hostile Jewish nationalism) while Paul's own understanding of the Collection remained strikingly consistent.

Because Georgi's interpretation is so multifaceted and thorough, he often added helpful insight and very sound conclusions on the meaning of the Collection. His appraisal and interpretation of some of the phases of the Collection divulged a great deal of insight into the meaning of the texts and the overall meaning of the Collection. At times he seems to adopt the Economic Approach emphasizing how Paul adapted the Collection to specific situations, and at other times he points toward the Ecumenical Approach, but in the end his assessment of the evolution of the Collection cannot stand.

### The Economic Approach

The Economic Approach can be largely affirmed according to the exegetical data from Chapter 3. As stated in Chapter 2, most of the proponents of this approach focus primarily upon 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 in order to understand the Collection as a whole, and this seems to be a very sound and valid method. This is for several reasons. First, the references to the Collection in Galatians 2:10 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 reveal an earlier stage in the Collection which exhibited some significant connections to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, connections which were more fully explicated in these two chapters. Because of this, it seems best to give these two chapters extra weight in determining the overall meaning and purpose of the Collection. The second reason comes from the provenance of 2 Corinthians 1-9. These chapters required a straightforward and sensitive dealing with the Corinthian audience due to the previous rocky relations between them and Paul. Therefore, it would behoove Paul to come across with honesty and sincerity in this letter, as it appears he has. To do otherwise would severely jeopardize his relationship with the Corinthian church. Additionally, this letter is relatively late, c. fall of 55. Thus, it represents some of Paul's latest comments on the Collection. The third reason is that 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is the only text where the Collection is explicitly part of the body of the letter. Galatians 2:10 is probably only an incipient reference. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 seems to fall more easily within the letter closing, though it may

very briefly discuss one final question from the Corinthian church. Romans 15:22-33 does fall properly within the letter closing as part of the description of Paul's larger travel plans. Finally, the amount of space devoted to the Collection itself should flag the interpreter to pay primary attention to this text. The length of this text and its sustained focus on the Collection itself causes it to be of primary importance. Thus, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is the only developed theological exposition of the Collection within a letter body that we have extant, as such it demands primary attention and weight. This focus on 2 Corinthians 8-9 results in an emphasis on the attitudinal, financial, and theological aspects of the Collection.

One balancing disclaimer should be made. Despite the primacy of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 it is necessary to deal adequately and objectively with the other texts. They do stand on their own within their own unique literary and historical settings, and they have insight to offer to the development and meaning of the Collection. Although 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 may be primary, one must let the other texts have a their particular voice as well to round out the picture. Galatians 2:10 (which demonstrated Paul's attitude toward giving to the poor, particularly within the Jerusalem church), 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (which demonstrated the pragmatic issues bound up in this financial endeavor, including how and how much persons should give), and Romans 15:22-33 (which demonstrated the reciprocity that the Collection represented between Jewish and Gentile believers) all show integral lexical and semantic connections to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, and all the texts can be read together to provide the most thorough grasp of the Collection.

The key aspect of this approach that can be affirmed is its attention to the central economic nature of the Collection. Betz dealt heavily with the administrative end of the Collection, but not upon the role of money as a means of spiritual reciprocity and as a serious issue among the churches giving to the Collection. Wayne Meeks reminded us of the powerful role of money in the lives of persons when he said of the Collection, "Would not the very act of dropping those hard-earned coins into a jar every Sunday have an effect on the way the participating members of the church would henceforth think about the morality of wealth and

poverty?”<sup>11</sup> The Economic Approach does more than any other approach (with a close second from the Ecumenical Approach) to allow an interpreter to see into the monetary realities that faced Paul, Corinth, and Jerusalem head on in the Collection. It opens up the interpretation of several portions of the Collection texts that deal with the monetary issues in very theological manner (2 Corinthians 8:8-15, 9:6-15, Romans 15:27), and it also helps to illumine the Collection by opening up some helpful sociological insights.<sup>12</sup>

Careful exegetical, theological, and sociological analysis of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 with light from the other contexts and an awareness of the highly significant economic aspects of the Collection is makes the Economic Approach one of the soundest evaluated here. However, this approach as employed by most interpreters does not address the definite ethical issues that are bound up with such giving and with the role of money itself. The Ethical Approach presented in Chapter 5 will expand on this economic focus to understand how Paul theologically understood the Collection as a part of the obedient Christian life, and will probe further into why he promoted it as he did.

### The Ecumenical Approach

Two rich words turn up over and over again in scholarly discussions about the Collection. The first is κοινωνία a term which appears in the significant Collection texts (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:14, Rom. 15:26-27). A term which designates sharing or a deep mutual participation in something. The second word is a more modern term which tries to capture the richness and significance of this concept; it is solidarity. These two words characterize the work of the two scholars surveyed in Chapter 2 under the Ecumenical Approach. Panikulam obviously emphasized

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<sup>11</sup> Meeks, 108.

<sup>12</sup> At this point it is appropriate to praise Dieter Georgi for his extensive appendix in the second edition of Remembering the Poor entitled “Is there Justification in Money? A Historical and Theological Meditation on the Financial Aspects of Justification by Christ.” This is a wonderful theological reflection on the economic aspects of Paul’s thought.

κοινωνία. He arrived at three final conclusions that are very sound in light of the exegetical evidence from Chapter 3: 1. The economic Collection has great theological significance in light of Paul's rich vocabulary. 2. Κοινωνία (in the sense of "sharing") has been made into an instrument of ecumenics, to forge unity between Jewish and Gentile Christian communities. 3. This sharing in the Collection is a cooperation with the grace of God and a tangible response to κοινωνία with the Son (1 Cor. 1:9).<sup>13</sup> This is an excellent synthesis of the meaning of the Collection as revealed by the helpful Ecumenical Approach.

Jouette Bassler prefers to see the Collection as the combination of service, charity, and worship which becomes a deep statement of solidarity.<sup>14</sup> She took some of the Evolutionary Approach and believed that Paul employed some questionable tactics, but she finally approved of the Collection project. Her analysis is not as sound as Panikulam's, but she has surely touched at the heart of the matter in emphasizing this solidarity.

What then was this solidarity to express? Three texts reveal this. First, Romans 15:27 shows that the Collection communicated a sense of indebtedness on the part of the Gentiles to the historic Jerusalem congregation. The Jerusalem church was the strongest tie to the historical realities of the entire Christ event (birth, death, and resurrection) and later of Pentecost. That church held a unique place of primacy as the historical ground and "home" of the gospel. The Gentiles recognized and acknowledged this in the Collection. The second tie is that the Jewish believers recognize and praise God for the salvation He has worked among the Gentiles, as it is tangibly demonstrated in the Collection (2 Cor. 9:13). Finally, Paul hoped that this would deepen familial love, longing, and prayer between the two branches of the Christian church (2 Cor. 9:14) as the Collection became an expression of love between them.

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<sup>13</sup> Panikulam, 57.

<sup>14</sup> Bassler, 111-112.



Despite these many strong points, there are a few weaknesses that the Ecumenical and Economic Approach share. They are both very helpful in what they reveal and serve as useful tools for probing the meaning of the Collection. However, they either leave out or downplay certain crucial elements such as the role of the Collection in the Gentile churches, the theological bases for ecumenics and generous giving, and the relation of the Collection to the broader strokes of Paul's thought. Many of these (and others) are contained within the more comprehensive Ethical Approach.

The Ecumenical Approach along with the Economic Approach demonstrate the best fit to the exegetical data of the various approaches surveyed in this study. Furthermore, these two approaches employ fewer hypotheses and require less special pleading than the other approaches. Wise and careful use of these approaches can help illumine the individual texts concerning the Collection as well as theological significance of the Collection as a whole. This then can further our aims of applying the Collection texts to the church today and correlating the Collection as a whole to Pauline theology to enrich it further.

### Summary of Conclusions

This evaluation has been mixed, rejecting some approaches, adapting some approaches with modification, and affirming some approaches. The Eschatological approach was rejected entirely as both adding dimensions to the Collection that were never part of Paul's intent and obscuring other aspects of the Collection that definitely arise from a careful examination of the texts. The Eschatological Approach added unwarranted elements of Paul's missiological theology to the Collection, giving the Collection an eschatological significance that it did not have for Paul. Additionally, the Eschatological Approach diminishes the economic, ecumenical, and ethical aspects of the Collection because of this eschatological emphasis. The Hellenistic approach can be cautiously adapted. It is certainly fruitful to take into serious account Paul's Hellenistic context and how it affects his thought, vocabulary, and writing. However, this must always be kept in balance with Jewish and Christian influences upon Paul and not overshadow them. Georgi

in the Evolutionary Approach dealt heavily with chronological and critical hypotheses which then largely shaped his reconstruction of the Collection. Georgi's hypotheses sometimes go beyond the data or at least impact the overall meaning of the Collection with little substantial evidence (such as the shift in the meaning of "poor" from a special eschatological designation in Galatians 2:10 to a simple sociological designation of impoverishment in Romans 15:26). To reshape the Collection on so many hypotheses which often do not fit the data brings weak results. Furthermore, the evidence of Chapter 3 suggests that continuity rather than discontinuity seems to run through the Collection. Finally, the Economic and Ecumenical Approaches were largely affirmed and approved as being very sound and valid perspectives for interpreting and synthesizing the meaning of the Collection, but they do leave out certain important aspects of the Collection, particularly its theological grounding and ethical significance.

## Chapter 5: An Ethical Approach to the Collection

### Introduction: Looking at the Collection as Ethics?

All of the approaches discussed and evaluated in the previous chapters have been thoroughly employed either repeatedly or by influential works on the Collection. The aim of this chapter is to develop an approach that has not received thorough treatment with regard to the Collection, an Ethical Approach. It will be helpful to define this approach and then unpack that definition in this introduction. An Ethical Approach to the Collection views the Collection as an act of Christian love and obedience to the Lord which is caused and informed by theological convictions. This issues in a fourfold examination of the Collection: 1. To seek to understand the exact nature, occasion, and intended effects of the exhortations and instructions given regarding the Collection. 2. To seek to understand the theological material in which Paul implicitly and explicitly grounds his exhortations. 3. To investigate the movement from indicative to imperative in order that the first two steps may illumine one another. 4. To compare, contrast, and correlate the Collection to the broader themes of Pauline ethics to illumine the Collection and enrich the study of Pauline ethics. The scope of this study only allows a cursory and seminal investigation of the use of this approach which will then open up doors to further study.

### Why an Ethical Approach?

There are two answers to this question, one positive and one negative. On the positive side the gleaning of a few important quotations will demonstrate how the Ethical Approach can be a fruitful one for the study of the Collection. First, one can recall the two quotations from Victor Furnish cited at the end of the Chapter 1. In his commentary he claimed in passing that the Christological example given in 2 Corinthians 8:9 becomes the indicative upon which all the other imperatives of the Collection are based.<sup>1</sup> Then in Theology and Ethics in Paul he argues for a deeper evangelical unity between theology and ethics which issues in a two-pronged task

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<sup>1</sup> Furnish, II Corinthians, 417.

for studying the apostle's writing: searching from theology to ethics, and from ethics to theology.<sup>2</sup> Both of these statements resound deeply with what is said in the Collection texts, though Furnish did not thoroughly investigate the possibilities of applying this approach to the matter of the Collection. James Dunn treats the Collection as the final topic in his examination of particular issues in Pauline ethics at the end of his scholarly study on Paul's theology. He too supported the interweaving of theology and ethics in a Collection as a way to understanding the project as a whole: "Third, and most important of all, the collection sums up to a unique degree the way in which Paul's theology, missionary work, and pastoral concern held together as a single whole."<sup>3</sup> A final quote from Furnish adds to this. He said of Pauline ethics, "It is the study, first of all, of the theological convictions which underlie Paul's concrete exhortations and instructions and, secondly, of the way those convictions shape his responses to practical questions of conduct."<sup>4</sup> The Collection is a rich tapestry of theological convictions and exhortations. If Furnish's definition is right it would seem that the Collection would be a locus classicus for the study of Pauline ethics, where the theological and the practical are integrated so strikingly.

However, on the negative side, the Collection seems never to have served a central or even important role in the study of Pauline ethics, nor has it ever been investigated according to the perspective of Pauline ethics. Interpreters have not probed the Collection as part of the theologically based ethical actions that Paul saw as necessary to the Christian life. Dunn's work is a possible exception. Yet, he simply investigates the Collection as one topic in his chapter on Pauline ethics, and while his work is insightful, it does not seem to be particularly guided by an Ethical Approach to the Collection. He presents an excellent theological synthesis of the Collection but does not relate it integrally to Pauline ethics. Dunn's treatment of the Collection does fall under his chapter on Pauline ethics, but his insight has been in

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<sup>2</sup> Furnish, *Theology*, 111.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 707.

<sup>4</sup> Furnish, *Theology*, 212.

recognizing that the Collection fit best into Paul's Christian ethics. However, Dunn has not employed this perspective to truly shape how he studied the Collection; Pauline ethics bore no distinguishing weight in his exposition of the Collection, nor did he integrate the Collection into the broader themes of Paul's theological ethics. Other works on Pauline or New Testament ethics show a noticeable absence of references to the Collection. A look into the indexes of these books reveals very few and very cursory references to the Collection texts in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.<sup>5</sup> It seems that the obvious connection of rich theology and challenging ethics has been observed but never pursued when studying the Collection.

### An Overview of Pauline Ethics

#### Setting

Students of Paul are well aware that he never put forth a system of ethical thought. Ethics, properly, is a systematic study of our judgments concerning conduct determining what is good and bad, as well as a system for evaluating attitudes and making decisions concerning conduct.<sup>6</sup> Paul did respond to particular issues and occasions as a missionary and a pastor, but he did not develop a structure of behavior as a systematic ethicist.<sup>7</sup> All of Paul's letters (including Romans) are occasional and specific to his audience, and thus they apply specific theological argument to ethical concerns (which may be entirely specific to the audience such as circumcision in Galatians 5:2, or more generalized such as sharing with teachers in Galatians 6:6). Paul certainly penned important ethical concepts and exhortation, but did not systematize them.

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<sup>5</sup> Particularly see Theology and Ethics in Paul by Furnish, The Ethics of Paul by Enslin, The Moral Vision of the New Testament by Hays, and The Ethics of the New Testament by Schrage.

<sup>6</sup> Furnish, Theology, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Richard B. Hays, The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community Cross and New Creation: An Introduction to New Testament Ethics (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), 17.

Yet the ad hoc nature of Paul's ethical instructions did not make them contradictory or overly disjunct, for Paul always tied his exhortations deeply to the content and underlying theology of his preaching.<sup>8</sup> Because the ethical material in Paul was rooted so deeply in his theology and proclamation, it can be studied as a whole and systematized in a helpful way, despite the diverse occasions which particular commands may have addressed. Paul was certainly a pastor and a missionary, and he wrote as such according to the exigency of various situations, but it is equally apparent that Paul is a theologian who responds to those needs according to an integrated kerygmatic theology.

#### The Structure of Pauline Ethics

A debate has waged regarding the relation of theology and ethics in Paul. H. D. Betz and M. Dibelius have insisted that Paul does write theology, but that his ethics were an unconnected adaptation of Hellenistic norms.<sup>9</sup> However, the majority of scholars disagree with this assessment, and can demonstrate both how the theological and ethical can be interrelated within a single passage and how the large theological and ethical blocks of Paul's letters show deep and thorough connections.<sup>10</sup> This connection raises some issues for consideration which will be treated briefly below.

The first aspect of theology and ethics that engages the student of Paul is the radical idea and effects of Paul's frequent theme of being "in Christ." It can be said being in Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian life for Paul. A large and meaningful structure can (and should) be built upon this concept, but it is all useless without the foundation of being in Christ. It is this union with Christ that enables the new life, indeed even makes it inevitable.<sup>11</sup> With special regard to the Collection, it is this union with Christ that binds a believer deeply to others united with Christ and thus forms the basis for love and edification within the community,

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<sup>8</sup> Furnish, Theology, 210.

<sup>9</sup> Hays, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Furnish did such an examination convincingly. See Theology, 92-111.

<sup>11</sup> Enslin, 107.

a major interest in Pauline ethics.<sup>12</sup> Paul saw his identity in Christ as determinative for his entire existence (Gal. 2:20), and he sought to see that same perspective and reality realized in the churches he founded and pastored.

The second aspect of this connection between theology and ethics is the rich (but sometimes paradoxical) relationship of the indicative and imperative in Paul. Paul seems to say in Romans 6, “You are dead to sin, now live like you are dead to sin!” The relationship between what a believer is and what a believer ought to be is constantly set side by side. How do these two realities, the being and the doing, relate? Furnish has offered a perspective that best addresses and makes sense out of this dialogical problem without introducing new problems. He said that the indicative is not “actualized” by the imperative, but that obedience is so “constitutive” of the new existence in Christ that Paul can insist on the transformation of a believer in Christ while exhorting them to be transformed (Rom. 12:1-2).<sup>13</sup>

Lastly, Hays has given an excellent synthesis of Paul’s moral logic under the headings of warrants, norms, and power. Regarding warrants, Hays answers the question “Why obey God?” from Paul’s theology. Paul’s teaching was either maligned or interpreted as grace undoing ethics by at least some persons (Rom. 3:6-8, 6:1ff), but Paul gives definite reasons for why a believer ought to obey God. The first reason is the eschatological transformation that has occurred in the person who has now died and lives a new life in Christ. Second, Christ has liberated persons from the power of sin and placed them in a new service (slavery) to God. Finally, everything has results and the expected results of this new existence is the fruit of the Spirit. Because the Spirit is at work in the church, the church should exhibit the Spirit’s fruit.<sup>14</sup> The fundamental norms of the moral Christian life which may find expression in a diversity of settings and issues are the imitation of Christ and result

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<sup>12</sup> Enslin, 72 and Hays, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Furnish, Theology, 225.

<sup>14</sup> Hays, 39.

in the edification of the community.<sup>15</sup> Finally, concerning the power necessary for living this Christian life in Paul, Hays said, “God is present in the church, changing lives and enabling an obedience that would otherwise be unattainable.”<sup>16</sup> It is transforming grace and the power of the Spirit that enables the believer to obediently live out a life in Christ. These larger issues or warrants, norms, and enabling are grounded specifically in Paul’s major theological themes, to which we now turn.

### The Themes of Paul’s Theological Ethics

Many authors treat the interrelatedness of Paul’s theology and ethics. The theological themes function in two ways in this relation. They first of all serve as those theological realities which Paul draws upon most frequently to demonstrate the empowering basis for the exhortations he issues. Secondly, the exhortations themselves also can be grouped into several categories that related broadly to these theological themes. The echoes of the mutual interaction of theology and ethics that Furnish described can be heard in the twofold function of these themes. We can now briefly examine the major theological themes in Paul’s ethics.

Christology. It is undeniable that Christ is at the center of all of Paul’s theology. The same is true of his theological ethics. It is especially the death and resurrection of Christ that frees the believer from the dominion of sin and ushers us into the reality of a new life, a new creation by God’s grace and under God’s lordship.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Christ is not only our source of transformation, but also our guiding example because “for Paul, Jesus’ death on the cross is an acts of loving self-sacrifice that becomes paradigmatic for the obedience of all who are in Christ.”<sup>18</sup> The cross is the highest example of what it means to faithfully obey God, in addition to being the loving act which focuses the saving and transforming grace available in Christ. It is this salvation and example that Christ offers which drove

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<sup>15</sup> Hays, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Hays, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Furnish, Theology, 166-67.

<sup>18</sup> Hays, 27.



much of Paul's ethical thinking, especially in terms of the believer's faithfulness and steadfast conduct in all of life.<sup>19</sup>

Eschatology. Eschatological realities are necessarily bound up with the event and effects of Christ. The believer now lives in an in-between world. The eschatological power of the Spirit is now present to enable a radically new ethical life, but there is also an eschatological reservation, for the final consummation and victory is yet to come (these are both mentioned in Rom. ch. 8). This places all present life and conduct in an eschatological perspective. Thus, God desires ethically transformed lives which will be ready for eschatological consummation and judgment.<sup>20</sup> Holiness in this life is not an option for a believer for it is not optional in the new order that will fully come in the future. Eschatology does not weaken ethics. On the contrary, it raises behavior in this life to have a perspective and significance that goes beyond this life to the final consummation.<sup>21</sup>

Law. One might expect that law has no place in Pauline ethics, given the common understanding that in Christ we are free from the Law (Rom. 8:2). But this term raises two important issues that are crucial in Pauline ethics. The first of these is the real power of sin that operates on and in the Mosaic law in order to prod and heighten sin in the lives of human beings. Sin is a real factor that must be reckoned with in the Christian life. It has been defeated with the work of Christ, but the victory over sin can only be expressed in an ongoing submission to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Sin can only be overcome by the continuing surrender to the Spirit, not by a one time dose of grace. Paul realized this, and so he exhorted his churches to ongoing obedience to and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. However, law did not disappear from Paul's understanding of the obedient life; it has been superseded by the law of Christ (Rom. 8:2, Gal. 6:2). Thus the grace offered by Christ is always normed by the standard set by Christ, which is the complete love of God and neighbor as the norms of the Christian life (and fulfills the OT Law,

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<sup>19</sup> Enslin, 197ff.

<sup>20</sup> Hays, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Schrage, 183-85 and Hays, 26.

Romans 13:8-10).<sup>22</sup> The OT law is no longer a binding demand on the believer, but it is a standard of God's holy will that the person in Christ can now fulfill through love. Faith acting in love is the key (Galatians 5:6).<sup>23</sup>

A New Community. In his apostolic ministry Paul aimed to create and build communities in Christ.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, as was stated above, being "in Christ" naturally joined the believer to others who were "in Christ" with geographical, cultural, and socio-economic barriers notwithstanding. Paul's own deep concern for his relationship with the Corinthian Church reveals the importance of this idea. Much of 1 Corinthians and probably all of 2 Corinthians deals with issues of community practice, purity, and unity. Paul employed the "body of Christ" as an image of the unity of believers, but it was more than an image for Paul, it was a reality that needed to be expressed in mutual service and love. Enslin claimed that, united by faith in Christ, love and forbearance were the two foundational principles of Christian community which guided conduct and care.<sup>25</sup> Freedom in Christ was valued, but Paul placed the edifying unity of the community above that freedom (cf. Rom. 14). For Paul, the vertical and horizontal relationships (God and neighbor) were both governed by genuine love.<sup>26</sup> Furnish combined unity of the two well when he said that Christian love "is a radical *giving up* of one's self [to God] and a radical *being given over* into the service of others." A sincere love expressed in service that maintains and edifies the community of believers (as well as others) is central to Paul's ethics (see Gal. 5:6, 6:10).

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<sup>22</sup> Dunn, Theology, 654.

<sup>23</sup> The discussion of Paul's understanding and use of the OT law and the concept of law is highly debated. This brief section is meant only to outline what appears to be the main ideas of Paul concerning law in relation to ethics according to a general consensus of scholars.

<sup>24</sup> Hays, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Enslin, 236, 249.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, Theology, 665.

### The Ethical Approach to the Collection

After this introduction we will apply the Ethical Approach as outlined at the beginning of this chapter to discuss the meaning of the Collection, drawing from the exegesis done in Chapter 3. This study will employ the following categories as outlined in the definition of the Ethical Approach above: The Exhortations, The Theological Grounds, Indicative-Imperative, and Correlation to Pauline Ethics.

#### The Exhortations

What exactly was Paul urging or instructing his congregations to do with regard to the Collection? The first answer comes from the seed to the Collection planted in Galatians 2:10. It is “remembering the poor” that is the beginning of the great Collection. As noted in the exegesis of 2:10 the “remembering” here points to an ongoing concern for the needs of the economically impoverished as they struggle with the necessities of daily life. This concern is not sentimental but should issue in concrete action and aid for the poor. Thus we can truly say that Paul’s zeal to remember the poor from the early point of Galatians 2:10 was the seed that later sprouted and grew into the Collection, a large project designed to relieve the suffering of fellow believers in economic hardship. Eschatology has certainly not eclipsed all else in Paul’s thinking, present human needs should be met, and it is the special responsibility of the church to meet the needs of believers. Thus, this remembering is the operation of love among the new community centered on Christ. Those in Christ, both Jew and Gentile, now belong to a new community which shares reciprocal loving aid.

2 Corinthians 8 and 9 reveals another principle that guides this care for the poor. Paul did not seek the impoverishment of the Corinthians to the benefit of the Jerusalem church (8:13). It was rather a matter of equality. The connection to Deuteronomy 15 was made when commenting on the giving attitude of the heart in 9:7. This OT background can be further explored on the basis of this idea of economic equality. We have shown that ἰσότης is not a hypostasized divine principle (cf. Georgi), nor do Hellenistic norms most strongly guide Paul (as Betz proposed). What then is the best background for this concept of equality? The texts of Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15 present themselves as immediate possibilities.

The concept of the poor in the Pentateuch and the equalization of wealth resound deeply with Paul's nuanced understanding of equality which he employed to inform the Collection. Paul probably saw here God's standard of love among His people that could be applied to the new community in Christ. We shall return to this possibility under the correlation to Pauline ethics to be discussed below.

Paul's third main emphasis of exhortation was simply "Give generously!" This is obviously interrelated to the issues of poverty and equality mentioned above, but "giving" appears to have some independent relevance in the Collection texts. Giving sincerely or generously is a normative part of the genuine Christian life. It is the manifestation of an authentic faith (2 Cor. 9:13) and it is one of the primary gifts of grace that should be manifested in Christian community (2 Cor. 8:7). Sincere Christian giving has spiritual and edificatory significance even when an immediate need is lacking, for Christians ought to be giving people simply because of the *generosity of God in Christ* and the continuing activity of grace in the life of the Christian community. Paul stressed the exhortation to give as an independent good in the Christian life. Paul saw this sincere and generous giving as a part of genuine Christianity. This is partially why he hesitated to issue a direct command. Paul believed that the activity of God's grace in the hearts of the Corinthian church (and other churches) would naturally lead them to unselfishly donate to others. Thus to command such giving is to force them to give (a type of extortion or pain, 2 Cor. 9:5,7) and to admit defeat, to admit that a genuine faith is not operating in the churches. Closely connected to this is the importance of attitude in giving. Some key repeated terms point to this: αὐθαίρετος, προθυμία, σπουδή, εὐλογία. Without the loving attitude the gift is again reduced to a painful, unwilling extortion which is not the character of Christian service. So this is a double edged exhortation. Paul exhorted them to give and to always give with the proper attitude, for only then is the giving truly pleasing to God and others. This has naturally moved us into the theological grounds for giving. It is difficult to isolate the two, but now we will turn to focus on the theology behind the Collection exhortations.

### The Theological Grounds

Some grounds for giving have already been mentioned in discussing the exhortations themselves: the need of others, the principle of equality, the grace of giving, Christian attitude. These principles however are rooted even more deeply in some of Paul's basic theological convictions that form the fertile foundation for the blossoming of the Collection.

The first of these is the loving unity of the Christian church. Recall that in Galatians 2:10 the concurrent but separate missions of the church to Jew and Gentile were united by the common concern for the poor, which at that point in history referred the needy Jerusalem church. As Paul described the points of continuity and sharing between himself and the Jerusalem leadership, the one concrete point of contact and unity would be this ongoing practice of remembering the poor.

Also, the giving which demonstrated the genuine faith of the Gentile churches (as they follow through on remembering the poor) had two effects on the Jerusalem church which correspond to the participles δοξάζοντες and ἐπιποθούντων in 2 Corinthians 9:13 and 14 respectively. The genitive absolute employing ἐπιποθούντων in v. 14 refers to the concurrent activity of the Jerusalem church while they glorify God. At the same time that they are thanking God for this gift, they are longing for their fellow believers and praying for them. The Collection gift deepens this longing and builds up the unity of the church.

The most important text regarding this foundational unity of the church comes in Romans 15. In this text the bifurcation between the spiritual and the material is completely relativized by the reciprocity between the churches on these two levels. Note that sharing (κοινωνία) is performed in both directions. In 15:26 and 27b the Gentile believers are sharing their material wealth with the impoverished Jerusalem church. 15:27a demonstrates that the original sharing has occurred from the spiritual wealth of the Jerusalem church flowing out to the Gentiles. Both had something to share, and the spiritual and material blessings are placed on equal footing in this reciprocity. The Gentile believers' debt (ὀφείλω) was one of loving reciprocity and not compulsion, for Paul said that the Macedonians and Achaians were pleased (εὐδοκέω) to share their resources with the needy

Jerusalem Christians. There is no inferior status to finances in the light of the prior spiritual benefits coming from the Jerusalem church. Furthermore, even though Paul described the Jerusalem believers as “the saints” (15:25, 26), it is the Gentile churches who perform a priestly service to them (λειτουργέω). It seems then that priestly service has taken a round trip from Jerusalem to the Gentiles and then from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church -- a reality that represents the thoroughgoing κοινωνία of the entire church.

It was this element of unity that was well addressed by the Ecumenical Approach. But the weakness of that approach was that it often failed to see that this unity was more than pragmatics or racial relations, but a fundamental reality of κοινωνία that existed among believers. Paul affirmed that being in Christ radically determined a person’s identity and family. A new community now existed between Jewish and Gentile believers that never could have existed before Christ. It is for this reason that the unity of the body of Christ can be a theological ground for the Collection: believers now have a new community more important than any other because of their shared identity in Christ, and it is in this new community that the deepest and most practical love should be expressed.

The loving unity of the Christian church is key to the theological grounding of the Collection. Yet, the theological concept *par excellence* that drives the Collection is grace (χάρις). The Collection itself is designated as χάρις, but Paul took the significance of grace beyond this mere designation. First, God is the source of all grace (2 Cor. 8:1, τοῦ θεοῦ being a genitive of source). Grace for Paul was not general kindness or good will, but the redemptive and transforming power of God at work in the world. This grace was bestowed (δεδομένην) upon the Macedonians enabling them to give with sincerity and generosity. Of course, God’s grace is paradigmatically expressed in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, in 2 Corinthians 8:9 it is probably a simple descriptive genitive, pointing to that particular grace as demonstrated by Christ). The grace that Christ manifested is one that resulted in generous self-sacrifice for the sake of others (δι’ ὑμᾶς). In this sense, Grace in the Collection is that transforming power of God which enable one to give sacrificially for the good of

another. There are many grace in the Christian life, but Paul lifted up generous giving (to the Collection) as one of the most important (2 Cor. 8:7). It is those who have experienced the grace of God for salvation who are able now to express grace in giving to others. Dunn has said regarding the relation of justifying and transform grace in the Collection, “Grace, we might say, had only been truly experienced when it produced gracious people.”

God’s grace is active through Christ to redeem and forgive. God’s grace was active in Christ, providing an example of self-sacrifice. God’s grace is active transforming believers and enabling them to manifest the grace of sincere and generous giving. Grace then became a designation for that very gift which lovingly bestows help to those in need. However, the chain of grace does not even stop here. Paul saw another step in the cycle of grace.<sup>27</sup> Grace is returned to God as thanksgiving and praise (2 Cor. 8:16, 9:15). At this point the cycle of grace envelopes the unity of the church in an even richer sense, for the cycle incorporates God, Gentile believers, Jewish believers into in to a conduit a grace that starts and ends with God. As the grace flows through this conduit it binds the Gentile Christian givers closer to God as they are transformed by and share in the activity of God’s grace. It bound the Gentile believers closer to the Jewish believers as gifts of grace are reciprocally shared between them. And, it bound Jewish Christian closer to God as they responded and returned grace to God in the form of thanksgiving and praise.

#### The Indicative-Imperative

Scholars have debated questions and confusion over the nature of the indicative and the imperative as Paul related them. This drove some to deny any connection (Dibelius and Betz as discussed above). However, most scholars, while admitting a connection between them, have wrestled with Paul’s logic in relating them. For example, Paul can say “You have been set free from sin.” (Rom. 6:22) right after he has exhorted them “Do not let sin reign.” (Rom. 6:12). Or, Paul can

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<sup>27</sup> Recall the graphical representation of this cycle of grace at the end of Chapter 3 as adapted from Panikulam, 57.

confidently assert “You have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:27), while to other he must urge “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 13:14).<sup>28</sup> How do the indicative reality and the imperative implication of further need relate to one another? The Collection may shed some light on this relation. In the Collection, the indicative has almost entirely overwhelmed the imperative. Paul explicitly refrains from issuing a command, for he knew that to forcefully command would be to admit a degree of defeat to the transforming power of grace in the churches. Paul expected his churches to know and understand the deep connection between the justifying and transforming power of grace (Paul himself did not even categorize them this discreetly). However, the churches at times either did not fully grasp or hold to the truthful kerygma he handed on to them (see the problems addressed in Galatians and 1 Corinthians 15), or they did not follow through to realize the real ramifications of these truths and the transforming effect of saving grace in their lives (probably best seen in some of the issues of 1 Corinthians). It is a bit of both that is at the root of the problem regarding the Collection, but Paul took a particular approach in exhorting the churches to generous giving in the Collection that revealed the perspective described above.

Paul seemed convinced that given the saving transformation of the Christians at Corinth and their ongoing spiritual growth, all he had to do was lay out the connection of how God’s grace leads to sincere and generous giving and they would do so with the help of God’s grace. His great confidence in them (2 Cor. 7:16) is partially expressed by the lack of direct exhortation to giving. Paul’s task as apostle and pastor in this situation was not to stir up the people to give generously, but simply to point out the deep connection between God’s grace and giving to the needs of others. Once the connection was made, Paul believed that the Corinthians would follow through under the unction of God’s grace. Thus in the case of the Collection it is the indicative that informs the imperative rather than vice versa.

#### Correlation to Pauline Ethics

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<sup>28</sup> These examples are taken from Schrage, 167.



An entire study could be devoted to correlating, contrasting, and comparing the Collection to the broader body of Pauline ethical material, but this section can only be suggestively exploratory. It is fascinating to grasp the all-encompassing use of the concept of grace by Paul in the Collection. Justification, salvation, ethics, giving, attitude, empowerment, and finances have all been subsumed and related under the heading of grace. It is important to note that the exercise of faith and the activity of the Spirit so prevalent elsewhere in Paul have been incorporated into the working of grace in the Collection texts.<sup>29</sup>

Next, in contrast to the Pentateuch, OT prophets, and the synoptic gospels, there is an inescapable absence of references to the poor in the Pauline corpus.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the Collection texts reveal the balance to this notable lack of references to the poor. It seems clear that churches of all of the major regions of the Pauline mission have been incorporate into the Collection project: *Galatia* (probably including Pisidia and Lyconia) in 1 Corinthians 16:1 and Acts 20:4, *Asia minor* in Acts 20:4, *Macedonia* in Romans 15:26 and Acts 20:4 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, and *Achaia* in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 and Romans 15:26. Thus it seems quite possible that the literary evidence for the absence of concern for the poor is misleading, for Paul addressed the Collection project and its tangible and theological concern for the poor in all the sectors of his missionary work.

Could it be that Paul truly does draw upon the egalitarian and Jubiliary concepts of the Pentateuch most strongly when developing the grounds and meaning of the Collection? The connection discussed above between 2 Corinthians 9 and Deuteronomy 15 suggests such a possibility. It is hard to determine due to the lack of extant literary evidence. However, this is a topic worthy of further investigation.

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<sup>29</sup> Dunn, *Theology*. 710.

<sup>30</sup> So much so that it has spawned an entire article devoted to the topic. See Paddy Meagher, "The Absence of 'The Poor' in the Pauline Letters," *Bible Bhashyam* 14 (1988): 78.

The unity of the Body of Christ has long been a recognized theme in Paul, especially as it related to the factions of Corinth (and the unity of Jew and Gentile in Ephesians). From an Ethical Approach, genuine and practical love can and should be shared across the obstacles of human differentiation, for all believers are now part of a new community based on their identity in Christ. The Collection stretches the unity of the Christian community beyond the congregation. Paul saw the Collection an interethnic, intercongregational act of love and unity. Love is always expressed in actions (Gal. 5:6, Rom. 13:8), and the Collection became a means to tangibly express this Christian love. This concept was recognized by Oscar Cullman who suggested that the Collection could be a paradigm for a step toward reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, how are we to understand Paul's strong sense of eschatology and the function of the Collection? Is the present, economic focus of the Collection somehow at odds with or at least not connected to Paul's understanding of eschatology. Richard Hays offered some suggestions that help integrate the two. Hays claimed that in Paul's thought, it is only ethically transformed lives that will truly be ready for the judgment and consummation to come at the very end. This intensifies ethics rather than relativizing them.<sup>32</sup> The church is to incarnate the righteousness of God in the world through suffering and service for others and only as this is realized with the Christian community be ready for the consummation that is to come. The Collection furthers the unity and righteousness of the Church as the Bride of Christ for that final wedding feast to come.

### Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief survey of the structure and themes of Pauline ethics as a prolegomena to the presentation of an Ethical Approach to the Collection. This overview helped to show why and how the Collection may be studied from an

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<sup>31</sup> Oscar Cullman, "The Early Church and the Ecumenical Problem," Anglican Theological Review 40 (1958): 294ff.

<sup>32</sup> Hays, 23.

ethical perspective. Following this we examined the Collection from this Ethical Approach on four categories: exhortations, theological grounds, indicative-imperative, and correlation to Pauline ethics. This study of the Collection from an Ethical Approach found and highlighted further insights to the Collection that were either unnoticed, skewed, or underdeveloped by the previous approaches to the Collection. The most important aspects emphasized by an ethical approach were love expressed in the new community in Christ, the grace of Christian giving, the role of unity and grace as theological grounds for the Collection, the indicative overshadowing the imperative in the Collection, the place of the concern for the poor in Paul's preaching, and community beyond the congregation.

This study proposes the Ethical Approach as the best approach for the Collection. It incorporates the insights from other approaches (particularly the Economic and the Ecumenical) and best fits the exegetical data. It also provides a way to incorporate the Collection into the broader scope of Paul's theology. The Ethical Approach cannot be employed with blind exclusivity. For example, an Ethical Approach will appreciate the economic and cultural realities that impacted the meaning and understanding of the Collection. However, it seems that these additional insights and the more helpful of the surveyed approach best be integrated *into* the Ethical approach as offering supporting insight. Therefore, the Ethical Approach is the best primary framework for interpreting the Collection.

## Chapter 6: Concluding Summary

This study began in Chapter 2 by analyzing some of the interpretive approaches taken toward the Collection. In Chapter 3 the New Testament texts dealing with the Collection were carefully investigated and exegeted. This exegetical evidence formed the basis for the evaluation of the various approaches in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presented and employed an Ethical Approach to the Collection. This final chapter will sum up the main conclusions of this study, present a brief synthesis of the main theological themes of the Collection and point on to further study.

### Summary of Conclusions

First through the analysis of previous studies on the Collection, five basic categories of interpretive approaches emerged. Sometimes these overlapped and informed one another, but each had its own unique contributions that guided the presuppositions, methods, and conclusions. These five categories were: The Eschatological Approach, The Hellenistic Approach, The Evolutionary Approach, The Economic (Economic) Approach, and The Ecumenical Approach.

From this point the exegesis of the main texts pertaining to the Collection (Galatians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:22-33) enabled the evaluation of the various interpretive approaches. The Eschatological Approach was outrightly rejected as both missing some aspects of the Collection and adding extra elements that did not fit the exegetical data. The Hellenistic Approach had to be carefully evaluated, for one must balance the Jewish and uniquely Christian aspects of Paul as well as considering his Hellenistic influence. The Evolutionary Approach was questioned on the grounds of its highly hypothetical reconstructions which disintegrated the Collection project into diverse phases. The Economic Approach was adapted with the recommendation to examine the various texts in comparison to one another, and it was commended for its attention to the economic aspects of the Collection. Finally, the Ecumenical Approach was affirmed and recommended for further study. However, both of these last two were showed

to be incomplete for they did not address all the relevant aspect or theological depth of the Collection.

This study also presented and employed an Ethical Approach as the best primary approach to understanding the Collection. This approach is formed and informed by the broader scope of ethical material in Paul. It was shown how and why the Collection may be viewed from the perspective of Pauline ethics. This approach was then employed to develop other aspects of the Collection not fully addressed by the other approaches as well as offering a better way to incorporate the insights that they do offer. The final conclusion then is for a multiplex employment of the various affirmed and adapted approaches integrated into the Ethical Approach. The other surveyed approaches add unique and valid insights into the purpose, function, and meaning of the Collection leading to a more thorough theological synthesis and ethical understanding, but it is the Ethical Approach which most comprehensively probes the meaning of the Collection.

#### A Brief Theological Synthesis of the Collection

A thoroughgoing theological synthesis is not within the scope of this study. But it is fitting for this conclusion to draw together some of the main theological insights offered by the various interpretive approaches and exegesis.

##### Grace

1. Grace comes from God as a saving and transforming power at work in those who believe in Jesus Christ.
2. Grace enables loving and generous conduct that would otherwise be impossible for unaided human beings to carry out, conduct which can be labeled miraculous or extraordinary because of its divine empowering.
3. Grace is exemplified in the self-sacrificial actions of Christ for others, particularly in the incarnation and passion, and may also be seen in the lives of exemplary believers.
4. Grace also enables acts of loving service and praise within the church. Thus ministry and worship are also gifts of God's empowering grace.

5. Finally, grace thus forms a cycle flowing from God as justification and transformation, flowing from one person to another as gracious acts of service, and finally returning to God as thanks and praise. This cycle of grace binds the human and divine participants together in an ever growing degree of *κοινωνία*.

### Christian Giving

1. Willingness, sincerity, generosity, goodwill, and zeal are necessary to truly Christian (and Christlike) giving. The attitude of the heart is of crucial importance to Pauline and Christian ethics. Christian ethics properly concerns not only conduct but the internal attitude and motivations for that conduct.
2. Christian giving is guided by two pragmatic concerns: concern for the poor and equality. Paul personally participated in and called his churches to actively and economically aid those in need. Balancing this, and as part of the concern itself, is the principle of equality where need and surplus should equalize for the good of all. It is quite possible that Paul developed this concern for the poor and equality from the egalitarian and Jubiliary concepts in the Pentateuch.
3. Christian giving as a gift of grace is a normative and precious fruit of a genuine Christian faith.
4. There is no sharp distinction between the financial and the spiritual in giving, both are necessary and valuable as they meet the needs of others.
5. The solicitation and giving of finances by Christians should be carried out sensitively and openly with the utmost attention given to guaranteeing the unquestionable probity of those handling the money and the final use of it.

### Ecumenical Unity

1. The unity of the church is best understood as a reality that is theologically grounded and expressed in arena of Christian ethics through familial love.
2. The unity of the church as a whole goes beyond the peaceful body life of individual congregations to be a transcongregational reality. This transcongregational reality should be addressed by an active sharing of concerns and resources, be they spiritual, financial, or otherwise.
3. The unity of the church can be damaged or threatened by social and cultural factors dividing different groups.

4. The recognition and acceptance of reciprocal serving and sharing is one of the best ways to repair and increase the ecumenical unity of the church, particularly as it relates to immediate needs faced by churches.
5. The Collection is an excellent tangible expression of love that can now be shown between diverse human beings because they are incorporated into a new community by their mutual faith in Christ.

#### A Theology of Blessing

1. God is the source and giver of all blessings.
2. God most usually employs human instruments as a regular means to bless other persons in need.
3. The attitude of the human instrument is crucial for present use as a means of blessing and for future increasing use as a means of blessing.
4. As God employs human instruments to bless others He simultaneously supplies the needs of those human instruments so they may live and increase as a means of blessing.
5. Blessing thus is seen in the flow of the cycle of grace as it moves from God through the instrument to the recipient and returns to God as thanks for the blessing.

#### The Collection as Ethics

1. The Collection incorporated exhortations to genuine Christian action based on theological grounds on a large scale project.
2. As ethics, the Collection can be incorporated into the broader scope of Paul's theology and ethics, resulting in a deeper understanding of the Collection and Paul's thought as a whole.

#### Pointing to Further Study

A few points presented in this study point on to further scholarly study with regard to the Collection. The first would be a thorough examination of the Collection from the Ethical Approach and a following integration of the Collection in order to illumine the study of Pauline ethics. Another gap for further study would be to test the hypothesis that the egalitarian and Jubilar concepts from the

Pentateuch have deeply influenced Paul as he understood the Collection. Also, the hypothesis that the Collection represents the balance to a seeming absence of concern for the poor in the Pauline corpus that is so central to many other portions of the Bible. Is it indeed possible that the Collection and the issue of the poor were major emphases of Pauline preaching and mission work that did not come into his letters because of other concerns?

The Collection is a fruitful point of intersection of Paul's missionary work, theology and ethics. As such it holds out rich possibilities for Christian theology and ethics. This study has hopefully refined and expanded the approaches to the Collection as a means to hearing Paul more accurately and heeding his call to join the cycle of grace and giving today.



## Appendix

### A Chronology of Paul

This appendix is necessary and helpful because of the impact that the chronology of Paul's life and letters has on the study of the Collection. As was stated in the main body of the work, this chronology is essentially adapted from Witherington's commentary on Acts.<sup>1</sup> This chronology will trace Paul's life only up to 62 CE (the facts after this date are very much in question). In the following chronology, the letters written by Paul will be underlined and the externally verifiable events will be in *italics*.

#### Phase One -- Pre-Christian Saul

c.5-10 -- Saul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia of orthodox Pharasaic Jews who are Romans citizens.

10+ -- Saul and his family moved to Jerusalem (Acts 26:4).

15-20 -- Saul began his studies in Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel.

30 (or 33)<sup>2</sup> -- Jesus was crucified under *Pontius Pilate (in office from 26-36)*.

31?-34 -- Saul persecuted the church in Jerusalem/Judea and Samaria. Stephen is stoned (c. 33, cf. Acts 6-7).

#### Phase Two -- Conversion and "Hidden Years"

33 (late, or 34) -- Saul was converted on the Damascus road and traveled on to Damascus (Acts 9).

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<sup>1</sup> See Witherington, Acts, 82-86. Witherington also made note to the somewhat different conclusions arrived at by Robert Jewett, A Chronology of Paul's Life (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979). Jewett does has some helpful discussions, especially of concrete historical evidence.

<sup>2</sup> Jewett, 26-29, discussed the evidence for these differing dates of the crucifixion. He opted for the later date, but this chronology views the earlier as the better date.

- 34-37 -- Saul was in Arabia, the Nabatean region of Syria east of Damascus and in the Transjordan (Gal. 1:17). Then Saul returned to Damascus and narrowly escaped the authorities under *King Aretas IV, who probably controlled the city beginning in 37 once Gaius Caligula became Emperor* (2 Cor. 11:32/Acts 9:23-25).
- 37 -- Saul's first visit to Jerusalem, which was a private meeting with Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-20). Paul preached to the Hellenists, and escaped to his home region of Syria/Cilicia by way of a boat from Caesarea Maritima (Acts 9:29-30).
- 37-46 -- Saul preached in home region; the results were unknown or inconsequential.
- 47 -- Saul was found by Barnabas in Tarsus and brought to Antioch; they preach there for a year (Acts 11:25-26).
- 48 -- Saul's second visit to Jerusalem (the famine relief visit) with Barnabas and Titus (Acts 11:27-30 and 12:25/Gal. 2:1-10). A private agreement was reached between Saul and the Jerusalem leaders that he and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, Peter and others to the Jews; circumcision would not be imposed. Issues of food and fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians remained unresolved (cf. Gal. 2:11-14).

### Phase Three -- Paul Begins His Missionary Travels

- 48 (early) -- The first missionary journey with Barnabas and Mark. Saul began to use his Greco-Roman name Paul (Paulos).
- 48 (late) -- They returned to Antioch. The Antioch incident took place when Peter and Barnabas withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles because of pressure from Judaizers from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11-14).
- 49 (early) -- Paul discovered the Judaizers had infiltrated Asia Minor and that they were disturbing some of the converts from the first missionary journey in south Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, etc.) Paul wrote Galatians shortly before going up to Jerusalem for the third time.
- 49 (later) -- The Apostolic council in Jerusalem. This was a public agreement that Gentile were not required to become Jews to truly become Christians. The Apostolic decree was issued, dealing primarily with food regulations and idolatry.
- 50-52 -- The second missionary journey, now with Silas. Silas was the official apostolic delegate who was to explain the decree to the churches. Paul traveled to Philippi and Thessalonica, and eventually stayed a long time in

Corinth before going to Ephesus then Jerusalem and finally returning to Antioch.

51-52 -- Sometime during his stay in Corinth, Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

51-52 -- *The Gallio incident (Gallio was proconsul of Achaia from 51-52)*. (See Acts 18:12-17). Increasing trouble from the Jews forced Paul to leave after a stay in Corinth between eighteen and twenty-four months.

52 -- A short break in Paul's missionary work when he reported to the Jerusalem church and returned to Antioch.

#### Phase Four -- Paul's Later Missionary Visits and Work

53-57 (58) -- The continuing ("third") missionary journey. Paul headed out from Antioch, passing through the Galatian region and arriving at Ephesus. He ministered in Ephesus for two or possibly three years.

54 (or early 55) -- Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus. This was not the first letter he had written to them, but it is the first one still extant (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-10). This failed to resolve the problems in Corinth.

55 (early) -- Paul made his painful visit to Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1, not mentioned in Acts). Then Paul wrote the "tearful" letter of 2 Corinthians 2:3-4 (which should not be identified with 2 Cor. 10-13). This letter appeared to have beneficial effects which were related to Paul by Titus (cf. 2 Cor. 7).<sup>3</sup>

55 (late) -- After receiving the good news from Titus, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 1-9 from somewhere in Macedonia. This letter reaffirmed Paul's good relations with the Corinthians and urged them to continue in the Collection project.

56 -- Paul traveled through Macedonia. While on this journey, he received new and profoundly troubling news from Titus about the situation in Corinth. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 10-13, probably from Thessalonica. This letter appears to have had a good effect.

56 (later) -- Paul arrived in Corinth for the third time, and once again he was on good terms with the Corinthians. He remained in Corinth for three

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<sup>3</sup> This the main difference between this chronology and that of Witherington's who claimed that the "tearful" letter was 2 Corinthians 10-13 (Acts, 84). This present chronology follows Furnish, II Corinthians, 41ff., on the order and dating of the Corinthians correspondences now contained in 2 Corinthians.

month. During this time (or very early in 57), he wrote Romans (which testifies to the restored relations between Paul and the Corinthians).

57 -- Paul traveled by boat from Phillippi to Troas to Miletus to Tyre to Caesarea Maritima and finally on to Jerusalem to be present for the Pentecost of 57.

57-59 -- After the riot and Paul's speech at the Temple (Acts 21-22), Paul was taken to the Roman ruler's Palestinian headquarters in Caesarea Maritima to stand before Governor Felix (c. 58). Paul stayed in prison for two years until *Festus replace Felix in July of 59 (or less probably July of 60)*. Some scholars believe that Paul wrote the Prison Epistles (Philemon, Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians) during this time.

59-60 -- Seasonal information suggests that the journey to Rome took place late in 59 (during the time of risky sea travel). Paul probably arrived in Rome early in 60.

60-62 -- Paul is under house arrest in Rome. This is the other probable (and traditionally affirmed) time for Paul to have written the Prison Epistles.

The information following 62 has been hotly debated. Was Paul martyred in Jerusalem under Nero (between 62 and 64)? Or, was he released? This debate is largely concerned with the authenticity and reliability of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus). This topic is too complicated and too unrelated to the present study for examination here.

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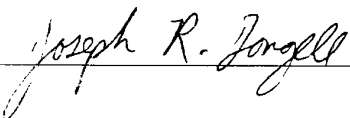


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FROM ESCHATOLOGY TO ETHICS:  
APPROACHING PAUL'S COLLECTION FOR JERUSALEM

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